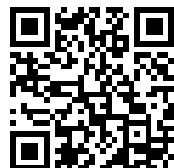

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ESSEX UNITS IN THE WAR
1914 - 1919.

SERVICE BATTALIONS
THE ESSEX REGIMENT
VOL. 6

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ESSEX REGIMENT CHAPEL.
WARLEY.

D. H. BURLS.
MARCH. 1935

THE ESSEX REGIMENT

9th, 10th, 11th, 13th & 15th Battalions

BY
JOHN W^{M.} BURROWS, F.S.A.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THIS volume contains the narratives of the Service Battalions of The Essex Regiment—9th, 10th, 11th, 18th and 15th. The first three were raised immediately upon the outbreak of war in 1914, and, proceeding to France in 1915, they were continuously engaged until the conclusion of hostilities in 1918. The 18th Battalion came into being in the winter of 1914-15 as the result of a great recruiting effort by the County Borough of West Ham. It was sent to France late in 1915 and served there until January, 1918, when, with a number of other units, it was disbanded owing to the difficulty of maintaining establishment. The 15th Battalion

ERRATA.

For 41st Brigade on p. 78, line 38, and p. 79, line 16, read 35th Brigade.

Casualties, p. 352: Captain J. S. Marks should be given as wounded and taken prisoner and not as killed in action.

composed of men from the Essex Territorial unfit for active service overseas, the defence duty until May of 1918, and then proceeded to France and took part in the 18th and 15th Battalions, and, in particular, the 18th Battalion, which had earned high reputation as fighting in the Somme, the quality of the service which the 18th Battalion was also much esteemed for, being specially mentioned by the Commander-in-Chief at the Battle of Cambrai. The 18th Battalion was composed of the finest flower of Essex, and it was their first call for volunteers and which they answered in Kitchener's Army. No force in the world could have degenerated in the degree of spirit of endeavour, and they were fortified by their natural intelligence and intrepidity, which transformed peaceful citizens into formidable soldiers. They added renown to an already famous Regiment. Several of the battle honours which now emblazon the King's colour were won by them on battlefields which have become historic, not only because of the success achieved, but because of the sacrifice which was demanded to attain it.

The County ought not to forget, nor succeeding generations to forget, the brilliant advance of the 9th Essex from Morlancourt on that fateful 8th of August, 1918, an advance which was resistless until the Armistice brought cessation of strife; the wonderful spirit of adventure which permeated the 10th Essex and which was never better exemplified than at the last battle; the stoutness of the 11th Essex, who, entering upon active service with a disheartening experience at the Battle of Loos, yet saw much hard and successful fighting on the Somme and subsequently, and went forward with the British Army to the Rhine—(when fighting in their ranks Lieut. F. B. Wearne received the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross); the 18th

Essex, which stood fast against the German counterstroke at Cambrai and helped to save an almost desperate situation ; the 15th Essex, which, sent out as a B1 Battalion, was speedily graded "A," a first line unit, because of its fighting quality. All these battalions played their distinguished parts in the great conflict and we should honour them. We may vary in opinion to-day upon war and the preparations which should be made to meet such an eventuality, but we must all unite in tribute to those men of Essex, those civilians, who, hating carnage as fiercely as any devotee of peace to-day, yet responded to the call in a spirit which inspires our regard and compels our respect.

The task of compiling this volume, though unduly prolonged, has been rendered very pleasant by the willing assistance which has been given by ex-members of the Battalions of all ranks. To Brigadier-General C. G. Lewes, C.B., D.S.O. (9th Battalion), Colonel Sir Donald Banks, K.C.B., D.S.O. (10th Battalion), and Brigadier-General F. G. Spring, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. (11th Battalion), I am particularly indebted for each writing a Foreword and thus introducing the book to those whom they formerly commanded. Many others have been ever helpful, including Mr. A. H. Woolford, Hon. Secretary of the 9th Essex Old Comrades' Association, and Mr. A. A. Mussett, M.C. The latter not only supplied his own reminiscences, but also loaned the use of photographs which have the merit, many of them, of having been taken whilst in the firing line. Captain R. A. Chell, D.S.O., M.C. (10th Battalion), has been unwearied in his assistance and generously gave me ready consent, with Sir Donald Banks, to take any extracts and illustrations which might be of service to me from their excellent and graphically written book, "With the 10th Essex in France." Without the help of Lieut. T. G. Murray (11th Essex), the story of that Battalion could never have been so fully outlined, for in addition to supplying many of the experiences which are here published, he has been indefatigable in persuading former comrades also to give their help. Special thanks are due to Major-General Sir Arthur Scott, K.C.B., D.S.O., for permission to reproduce certain of the maps executed by him and published in the "History of the 12th (Eastern) Division in the Great War"; to the author (the late G. H. F. Nichols, "Quex") and publishers for a similar courtesy in respect of "The 18th Division in the Great War." Quotations have also been made from "Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches" (Boraston) and the narratives of the work of the 2nd and 6th Divisions. Lieut.-Colonel H. Sales de la Terriere, D.S.O., M.C., Lieut.-Colonel G. Green, M.C., Major H. Cardinal, Captain E. Grahame Stone, Captain J. Macey, Captain E. A. Barltrop, D.S.O., Captain F. H. Wise, M.C., Lieut. C. E. Corps, M.C., Dr. A. C. Holthusen (13th Essex), Mr. E. H. Warren, Rev. L. Coulshaw, M.C. and many others have afforded valued assistance, whilst to Captain A. W. Stapley I am indebted for much information concerning the 15th Essex.

Once again it is a pleasure to record the help and co-operation given by the Lord-Lieutenant (Sir Richard Colvin, K.C.B.), the Chairman (Colonel F. H. D. C. Whitmore, C.M.G., D.S.O.), members of the Essex Territorial Association, and the Secretary (Lieut.-Colonel Sinclair Thomson). Major F. Becke, R.E., and Mr. E. A. Dixon, of the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence, have never failed me when I have asked their assistance, and to Mr. Blaikley and his staff, at the Imperial War Museum, I owe a special word of thanks for the trouble they have taken to supply me with maps and photographs. Captain D. H. Burles has again skilfully drawn many of the diagrams and plans.

The author asks forbearance to close on a personal note. When the volume relating to the service of the Essex Territorial Brigade was announced, certain of the reviews suggested that the publication of this series of volumes had been financed by the Essex Territorial Association. So far from this being the case, the whole cost of the undertaking has been met by Messrs. John H. Burrows and Sons, Ltd. The writing of the narratives and all work in connection therewith has been entirely honorary, including the drawings of Captain D. H. Burles, which have been such a feature throughout the series.

JOHN WM. BURROWS.

Southend-on-Sea.

January, 1935.

THE ESSEX REGIMENT.

1st (44th, EAST ESSEX), 2nd (56th, WEST ESSEX), 3rd (ESSEX (RIFLES) MILITIA), 4th (T.), 5th (T.), 6th (T.) and 7th (T.) BATTALIONS.

BATTLE HONOURS.

Borne upon the King's Colour : " Le Cateau," " Marne, 1914," " Ypres, 1915, 1917," " Loos," " Somme, 1916, 1918," " Arras, 1917, 1918," " Cambrai, 1917, 1918," " Selle," " Gallipoli, 1915-16," " Gaza."

Borne upon the Regimental Colour : The Castle and Key, superscribed Gibraltar, 1779-82, and with the motto *Montis Insignia Calpe* underneath (2nd Bn.). The Sphinx, superscribed " Egypt " (1st Bn.). An Eagle (1st Bn.). " Moro " (2nd Bn.). " Havannah " (2nd Bn.). " Badajos " (1st Bn.). " Salamanca " (1st Bn.). " Peninsula " (1st Bn.). " Bladensburg " (1st Bn.). " Waterloo " (1st Bn.). " Ava " (1st Bn.). " Alma " (1st Bn.). " Inkerman " (1st Bn.). " Sevastopol " (1st and 2nd Bns.). " Taku Forts " (1st Bn.). " Nile, 1884-5 " (2nd Bn.). " Relief of Kimberley " (1st Bn.). " Paardeberg " (1st Bn.). " South Africa, 1899-02 " (1st and 2nd Bns.)¹

The full list allowed for the War 1914-1919 was as follows : " Le Cateau," " Retreat from Mons," " Marne, 1914," " Aisne, 1914," " Messines, 1914," " Armentières, 1914," " Ypres, 1915, 1917," " St. Julien," " Frezenberg," " Bellewaarde," " Loos," " Somme, 1916, 1918," " Albert, 1916, 1918," " Bazentin," " Delville Wood," " Pozieres," " Flers-Courcelette," " Morval," " Thiepval," " Le Transloy," " Ancre Heights," " Ancre, 1916, 1918," " Bapaume, 1917, 1918," " Arras, 1917, 1918," " Scarpe, 1917, 1918," " Arleux," " Pilekem," " Langemarck, 1917," " Menin Road," " Broodseinde," " Poelcappelle," " Passchendaele," " Cambrai, 1917, 1918," " St. Quentin," " Avre," " Villers-Bretonneux," " Lys," " Hazebrouck," " Béthune," " Amiens," " Drocourt-Quéant," " Hindenburg Line," " Havrincourt," " Epéhy," " St. Quentin Canal," " Selle," " Sambre," " France and Flanders, 1914-1918," " Helles," " Landing at Helles," " Krithia," " Suvla," " Landing at Suvla," " Scimitar Hill," " Gallipoli, 1915-16," " Rumani," " Egypt, 1915-17," " Gaza," " Jaffa," " Megiddo," " Sharon," " Palestine, 1917-18."

1. Honours for service in South Africa were also earned by the 3rd Battalion, which went to South Africa in 1902, and by the four Essex Volunteer Battalions, later known as 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Territorial Battalions, 161st Brigade, 54th Division. They contributed special service companies to the 1st Battalion and also detachments to the City Imperial Volunteers, a regiment raised by the City of London for the South African War.

All the honours emblazoned upon the King's Colour were won in the war of 1914-1919. Eleven battalions of the Essex Regiment served overseas in that great campaign. They were: 1st, 2nd, 4th (T.), 5th (T.), 6th (T.), 7th (T.), 9th (S.), 10th (S.), 11th (S.), 18th (S.) and 15th (S.). The 1st and 2nd Garrison Battalions of the Essex Regiment also did duty abroad. Members of the Regiment who were killed in action, died of wounds or died of disease numbered 8,209, distributed as follows: 1st Battalion, 1,787; 2nd Battalion, 1,457; 4th Battalion, 445; 5th Battalion, 381; 6th Battalion, 270; 7th Battalion, 805; 9th Battalion, 1,044; 10th Battalion, 1,014; 11th Battalion, 957; 18th Battalion, 575; 15th Battalion, 24. The 2nd Battalion was present at Le Cateau, August 26th, 1914, and was the first unit of the Essex Regiment to be actively employed. Again, as part of the 12th Brigade, the 2nd Battalion forced the passage of the Marne at the barrage near La Ferte in September, 1914, and was also employed in the battles of St. Julien, Frezenberg Ridge and Bellewarde Ridge, constituting the group "Ypres, 1915," and for its services there the Battalion was three times mentioned in despatches by Earl French of Ypres, the British Commander-in-Chief. In the series of encounters in the Ypres Salient, 1917, the 1st, 2nd and 10th Battalions were heavily engaged. At Loos, 1915, when the newly raised Service battalions were first under fire, the 9th and 11th Battalions fought with heavy losses, whilst in battles of the Somme, 1916, the 1st, 2nd, 9th, 10th, 11th and 18th Battalions—all the Essex infantry units in France at that time—were frequently in action. Again in 1918, in the battles of the same area, five of the battalions (the 13th had been disbanded) were involved, struggling against the German offensive and then, with depleted numbers, turning and driving back the enemy armies. It was at Arras that the 2nd Battalion specially distinguished itself, with the rest of the 4th Division, in the critical fighting of March 28th. The 1st, 2nd, 9th, 10th and 18th Battalions were present at the successful offensive from Arras in 1917, the 1st Battalion, with the Newfoundlanders, being specially proud of the part it played in operations subsequent to the capture of Monchy-le-Preux, when the 1st Essex alone sustained 600 casualties. In the hard fighting in the same area in 1918 the 2nd Battalion was present, for it was engaged in the battle of Drocourt-Quéant, when, in co-operation with Dominion troops, a successful attack was delivered over a wide belt of heavily wired and entrenched country. Sir Jocelyn Byng's army for the operations in November, 1917, known as the Battle of Cambrai, included the 1st, 9th, 11th and 18th Battalions, of which the 1st and 18th were prominent in holding up the German counter-attack. One company of the 13th, though isolated, refused to give ground and held on until all its ammunition was exhausted. The warfare in the Cambrai area in 1918 was participated in by the 1st Battalion and was notable

for the over-running of the Hindenburg Line. The series of operations which culminated in the collapse of the German armies is represented by "Selle" and in this advance to victory the 1st, 9th, 10th and 11th Battalions bore a part. The 15th Battalion, landing on May 6th, 1918, advanced with the First Army and was at Grand Rejet, near Toufflers, in the Roubaix area, when hostilities ceased. "Gallipoli, 1915," was earned by the 1st Battalion, which fought throughout this expedition, from the landing on "W" Beach in April, 1915, to the withdrawal in January, 1916. The Essex Infantry Brigade (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions) took part in the Suvla Bay operations with the 1st Battalion and also won the honour "Gaza," which covers the three actions fought before this city in Palestine was captured in November, 1917.

During the campaign the battalions were attached as follow : 1st Battalion—88th Brigade, 29th Division, and later 112th Brigade, 37th Division ; 2nd Battalion—12th Brigade, 4th Division ; 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions—161st Brigade, 54th (East Anglian) Division ; 9th Battalion—35th Brigade, 12th Division ; 10th Battalion—53rd Brigade, 18th Division ; 11th Battalion—71st Brigade, 24th Division, later 18th Brigade, 6th Division ; 13th Battalion—6th Brigade, 2nd Division ; 15th Battalion—177th Brigade, 59th Division.

ESSEX REGIMENT CHAPEL.

On March 1st, 1925, on the recommendation of Major-General Ventris, then Colonel of the Regiment, and with the sanction of the Army Council—during the period of command of the Depot of Major R. N. Thompson and the chaplaincy of Rev. A. J. Wilcox—the Garrison Church at Warley, near Brentwood, was dedicated as the Essex Regiment Chapel by the Chaplain General of the Forces (Bishop Taylor Smith). Upon this occasion also the colours of the 10th and 11th (Service) Battalions and the 1st and 2nd Garrison Battalions of The Essex Regiment were received for safe custody. The day was further memorable in that the colours of the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions, emblazoned with war honours, were all carried on parade. The Lord-Lieutenant of Essex (Lord Lambourne) was present at the service and subsequently addressed the troops. Other colours hung in the Church are those of the 1st Battalion (44th), known as the Crimean colours, 2nd Battalion (56th), carried from 1826 to 1864, the 3rd (Special Reserve) Battalion, the 15th (Service) Battalion, 4th (West Essex Militia) Battalion, and the 5th Battalion Essex Local Militia. The colours of the 44th were originally deposited in St. Peter's Church, Colchester, and they were handed back to the custody of the Battalion in July, 1928, who, in turn, placed them in the Chapel on May 26th, 1929. They were received by the Bishop of Chelmsford (Dr. H. A. Wilson). The emblems of the 3rd (S.R.) Battalion were transferred from Harwich Church and handed over by the

Lord-Lieutenant to the Bishop of Chelmsford (Dr. Guy Warman) on October 31st, 1926. In May, 1927, the colours of the 9th (Service) Battalion, which had been presented by the Prince of Wales in France in December, 1918, were deposited by the then Colonel of the Regiment (Major-General F. Ventris, C.B.) The sermon on that occasion was preached by Rev. H. P. Berkeley, M.C., formerly Chaplain of the 12th Division, of which the 9th Battalion formed part. The celebrated Waterloo Colours of the 44th, hitherto in the custody of the 1st Battalion, were hung in the Church in June, 1931. The fragment of the King's Colour which was torn away by the French lancer at Quatre Bras has been retained at the Officers' Mess of the Battalion. The building also contains the following memorials: To Major-General Hay, who commanded at Warley when it was the depot of the East India Company; to those of the 2nd Essex who lost their lives in Egypt and the Nile Campaign, 1884-6; to those of the 1st Battalion who fell in the South African War, 1899-1902; to Lieut. Francis Newton Parsons, V.C., who was killed at the battle of Driefontein, in 1900; to 185 officers and 8,244 warrant officers, N.C.O's. and men of the 1st and 2nd Battalions who were killed or died of disease in the war of 1914-1919, and to Major-General T. E. Stephenson, C.B., Major-General F. Ventris, C.B., Colonel Almeric G. Spencer and Lieut.-Colonel W. G. Charles, C.M.G., D.S.O. (the four latter oaken pews). Stained glass windows, also to the memory of those who fell in the war of 1914-1919, have been erected by the 4th (T.), 5th (T.), 6th (T.), 7th (T.), 9th (Service) and 10th (Service) Battalions. That of the 9th Battalion was the personal gift of Brigadier-General C. G. Lewes, C.M.G., D.S.O. The apse windows were presented by the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The 11th (Service) Battalion provided a new south door at a cost of £40. The memorial at Alverstoke Church, Hampshire, to officers and men who perished in the Afghan campaign, 1841-42, was removed to the Church in 1926. The wording upon the tablet runs: Sacred to the memory of Colonel T. Mackrell, A.D.C. to Her Majesty, Major W. B. Scott, Captain T. Swaine, Captain R. B. McCrea, Captain T. R. Leighton, Captain T. Robinson, Captain T. C. Collins, Lieut. W. H. Dodgin, Lieut. W. G. White, Lieut. F. M. Wade, Lieut. A. Hogg, Lieut. E. S. Cumberland, Lieut. W. G. Raban, Lieut. H. Cadett, Lieut. S. Swinton, Lieut. F. J. C. Fortye, Lieut. A. W. Gray, Paymaster T. Bourke, Lieut. and Q.M. R. R. Halahan, Surgeon J. Harcourt, Assistant Surgeons W. Balfour, W. Primrose and 645 non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the 44th Regiment, who fell upon the field of battle in the disastrous Afghan War of 1841 and 1842. They sank with arms in their hands unconquered, but overpowered by the united horrors of climate, treachery and barbarous warfare. Their colours, saved by Captain J. Souter, one of the few survivors, hang above this stone, which is erected to their memory by the

officers of the 44th Regiment, June, 1844. "And if Thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy because they have sinned against Thee, and shall return and confess Thy name, and pray and make supplication before Thee, then hear Thou from the Heavens and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel.—2nd Chronicles vi, 24, 25." In March, 1927, there was erected on the south side of the Chapel an oak cross from Trones Wood, France, as a memorial of the 53rd Brigade of the 18th Division. It bears the names of the three battalions composing the Brigade, viz., 10th Battalion The Essex Regiment, 8th Battalion The Royal Berkshire Regiment and 7th Battalion The Royal West Kent Regiment, with the 53rd Trench Mortar Battery. The following is the inscription: "To the glory of God and the memory of those of the 53rd Infantry Brigade (18th Division) who fell gloriously in re-taking Trones Wood from the 2nd Guards Grenadier Regiment, 27th August, 1918." An appeal was issued, with the approval of the Lord-Lieutenant, during the chaplaincy of Rev. W. F. Crosthwait, M.C., asking the County to contribute the sum of £2,000 for the furnishing and re-seating of the Chapel. As the result, the County Borough of Southend presented the oaken choir stalls (dedicated February 26th, 1928, by the Archdeacon of Southend, Ven. P. M. Bayne); the Borough of Ilford the west door (March 25th, 1928); the Borough of Chelmsford the pulpit (July 15th, 1928); the Borough of Maldon the lectern (July 20th, 1930) and the Borough of Colchester, west window (December 7th, 1930). A memorial to the Lord-Lieutenant (Lord Lambourne), Provincial Grand Master of Essex from 1902 to 1928, and to the Masonic brethren of Essex who fell in the War, 1914-19, was unveiled on May 31st, 1931. It consisted of a new front to the West Gallery. Several private gifts have been also made, including panels and pews, as memorials of former officers of the Regiment.

AFFILIATED REGIMENTS.

In 1926, in accordance with the official desire that British battalions should be linked with units in the Overseas Dominions, the Essex Regiment was associated with the Essex Fusiliers, Canadian Militia, with headquarters at Windsor, Ontario. This unit dates from 1866, when the 23rd Essex Battalion of Light Infantry was constituted, with Lieut.-Colonel A. Rankin in command. There were six companies, one each at Windsor (organized in 1862), Sandwich (1862), Leamington (1863), Amherstburg (1863), North Ridge (1861) and Kingsville (1866). The Battalion was removed from the list of active Militia in 1870, because it failed to complete its re-organization, but the Windsor and Leamington companies were retained as independent companies. These two continued to function until 1882, when the Windsor Company was attached to the 24th (Kent) Battalion and the Leamington Company to the 25th (Elgin) Battalion. At the time of the North-West Rebellion the 21st (Essex) Battalion was raised and the two independent companies became the first and second companies

of the new unit. The three other companies were formed at Essex Centre, Amherstburg and Windsor respectively. Lieut.-Colonel J. R. Wilkinson was in command. The title was changed in 1887 to 21st Battalion, Essex Fusiliers, and again in 1901 to 21st Regiment, Essex Fusiliers, when it became a city corps, with headquarters at "The Armouries," which were opened at Windsor in the year following. The Battalion in 1904 had an establishment of eight companies, of which only two (Walkerville and Leamington) had headquarters outside Windsor. The Governor-General (the Earl of Elgin) was entertained by the officers of the Battalion when on a visit to Windsor and in 1902 the detachment was invited to Detroit to partake in the festivities consequent upon the visit of President Roosevelt, and was inspected by him. The band of the Coldstream Guards was welcomed in 1903 and that of the Black Watch in 1904. One of the Regiment's most treasured distinctions is that it was the first Canadian regiment, as such, to enter the United States after the American War of Independence, when the members were the guests of the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition at St. Louis in 1904 and were there visited by General Cronje, one of the Boer leaders in the South African War. The Fusiliers supplied part of the guard of honour for the Duke and Duchess of York (King George V and Queen Mary) when taking part in the Quebec Tercentenary celebration in 1908.

Upon the outbreak of war in August, 1914, details were called out for home defence duty, which was the protection of the Windsor Armouries. The detachment was originally composed of 14 N.C.O.'s and men, under Sergeant-Major Smith. The duties were increased until by May, 1916, the guard comprised ninety N.C.O.'s and men. When, however, depot battalions were formed in October, 1917, the details were relieved from this service. The Battalion contributed hundreds of recruits to the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Six officers and 223 other ranks were sent in 1914 to the 1st Battalion, C.E.F., and between 200 and 800 other ranks to the 18th Battalion, C.E.F. The 99th Battalion, C.E.F., was authorized to be raised in December, 1915, in the regimental area, and sailed for England in June, 1916, with a strength of 30 officers and 825 other ranks. In 1915 between 200 and 300 men were enlisted for the 33rd Canadian Battalion, C.E.F. The 241st Battalion, C.E.F., was formed in the regimental area in 1916 and left Canada in April, 1917, with a strength of 21 officers and 625 other ranks. When in April, 1920, the Fusiliers were re-organized into one active and two reserve battalions of four companies each, the 1st perpetuated the 18th Battalion, C.E.F., the 2nd reserve, the 99th Battalion, C.E.F., and the 3rd reserve the 241st Battalion, C.E.F. The 99th and 241st Battalions did not proceed to France, but were used when in England to provide reinforcements to other units in the fighting zone. The 18th Battalion had long and honourable

service on the Western Front. It left Canada for England with a strength of 36 officers and 1,081 other ranks and, after a short stay, arrived in France on September 15th, 1915, as part of the 4th Brigade, 2nd Canadian Division. It was present at the stern fighting at St. Eloi in April, 1916; by a gallant advance of 1,200 yards in September, 1916, with the 4th Brigade, it rendered possible the capture of Courceleste the same evening; took part in the battle of Ancre Heights in October, when it advanced 500 yards north of Courceleste; was with the Canadian Corps in the capture of Vimy Ridge in April, 1917; suffered in the heavy fighting at Hill 70 in August, 1917; supported the attack upon Passchendaele late in 1917; made a determined advance with the Canadian Corps on August 8th, 1918, when it covered 5,000 yards and reached the extreme limit of the objective east of Marcelcave; co-operated with the 19th Battalion in the taking of Fransart on August 16th; fought with the Canadian Corps in the battle of the Scarpe at the end of August, capturing Guemappe, and in five days achieving an advance of seven miles; reached the southern outskirts of Iwuy after crossing the Canal de l'Escaut on October 10th, and when the Armistice was declared at 11 a.m. on November 11th, 1918, was at Cipy, immediately south of Mons, marching thence to the Rhine. The Battalion returned to the south of Brussels, Belgium, in January, 1919, and in April was transferred, with the other units of the 2nd Division, to England, and thence to Canada for demobilization. The 1st Battalion, C.E.F., was raised in Western Ontario and was composed of drafts from 16 Militia regiments, including the Essex Fusiliers, sailing with the first Canadian contingent in September, 1914. It was ordered to France in February, 1915, and was in reserve in April at Vlamertinghe, when the German gas attack temporarily broke the line, and it was pushed forward to fill the gap, suffering heavy casualties in the operation.

In 1919 Edward Prince of Wales paid an official visit to Windsor Armouries and was warmly welcomed. The re-organization of the Fusiliers, effected in 1921, placed the headquarters and three companies in Windsor, with "A" Company in Walkerville, but in 1924 the Walkerville Company was transferred to Windsor, so that the Battalion was concentrated there. In 1927 the Battalion adopted the kilt and was designated The Essex Scottish.

The 44th Battalion Australian Military Forces made a proposal of alliance with 1st Bn. The Essex Regiment in 1927, which was accepted, War Office approval being subsequently obtained. The Australian 44th has an honourable and interesting history. The Fremantle Rifle Volunteers were formed prior to the establishment of the Commonwealth Government and later became known as the Western Australian Infantry Regiment. When compulsory training was introduced the units were reorganized and the Regiment was then numbered the 86th. Many of the members of the corps, as successively designated,

served in Egypt, Soudan and South Africa, and earned for the Regiment the battle honour "South Africa, 1899-1902." At the close of the war of 1914-1919 all the regiments were re-numbered to commemorate the battalions constituting the Australian Imperial Force. Thus it was that the 86th became the 16th Battalion, A.I.F., and received the latter's colours. Another re-organization subsequently caused the Battalion to be known as the 44th. It was accorded the right of carrying on the traditions of the 44th Battalion, A.I.F. The latter had been raised early in 1916 by Major-General J. H. Bruche, C.M.G., when he was commandant in Western Australia, prior to going on service with the A.I.F. He remembers it as one of the very few battalions in which almost every man had a rifle, for most of the other units at the time had only one to eight men. The Battalion embarked for England on June 6th, 1916. There it was part of the 3rd Australian Division, then on Salisbury Plain. The Battalion was sent to France late in November and, after a spell of trench warfare, had its first experience of offensive operations at the Battle of Messines in June, 1917, when there were over 800 casualties. Thereafter to the close of the war the 44th were heavily engaged, notably in the fight for Passchendaele, the struggle to save Amiens and the victorious advance which took them to Bapaume and over the Hindenburg Line. The Battalion lost 488 killed and 1,846 wounded in its two years of service, during which it claims never to have sacrificed a trench and, whilst capturing hundreds of prisoners, to have lost only eight to the enemy. The battle honours inscribed on the regimental colours are, in addition to South Africa: Ypres, 1917, Passchendaele, Ancre, 1918, Amiens, Messines, 1917, Broodseinde, Somme, 1918, Hamel, Mont St. Quentin and Hindenburg Line.

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9th Bn. The Essex Regiment

FOREWORD.

(By BRIGADIER-GENERAL C. G. LEWES, C.M.G., D.S.O.).

I HAVE been asked to write a foreword to the narrative of the 9th Essex Regiment, and I gladly acquiesce. I wish first to express my immense admiration for the behaviour and endurance of the men who joined up at Shorncliffe in August, 1914. Here, 1,000 men, coming from comfortable homes, were dumped down in a camp without kit and without even a knife and fork, and I could obtain nothing for them.

Not a word of complaint was made by the men, and their wonderful endurance not only made possible the almost super-human task of forming a Battalion, but laid the foundation of the discipline which rendered such excellent service later in France.

Another tribute that I should like to pay is to thank the N.C.O.'s of the Regular Army, the majority of whom were already long retired, who assisted me in the task of forming the Battalion. Without their knowledge, tact and unflinching devotion to duty, the job could not have been done.

And, finally, to all officers, N.C.O.'s and men who served in the 9th Battalion, I can only say they were splendid, an honour and a pleasure to command, and worthy of the perfect reliance which I placed in them.



Brigadier-General.

Pendean,
Midhurst.
12.6.38.



Brig.-Gen. C. G. LEWES, C.M.G., D.S.O., who trained the 9th Bn. The Essex Regt. and commanded the unit in France until July, 1916.

9th Battalion The Essex Regiment.

FORMATION OF THE 12th DIVISION.

THE 12th (Eastern) Division was formed from units raised in the Eastern and Home Counties—part of the “First Hundred Thousand.” The various battalions were trained at their brigade centres and when instruction was sufficiently advanced, the brigades—35th, 36th and 37th—at the end of November, 1914, were concentrated in and around Hythe, Kent, and the Division came into being under the command of Major-General J. Spens, C.B. Essex had a very considerable interest in the 12th Division. The 9th Battalion The Essex Regiment—the first of the County units to be recruited specially for war service—was part of the 35th Brigade (Brigadier-General C. H. C. Van Straubenzee), the other battalions being the 7th Norfolks, 7th Suffolks and 5th Royal Berkshires. The headquarters were at Shorncliffe. The other two Brigades also had Essex associations. The 36th—8th and 9th Royal Fusiliers, 7th Royal Sussex and 11th Middlesex—was constituted at Colchester and the 37th—6th Royal West Surreys, 6th East Kents, 7th East Surreys and 6th Royal West Kents—assembled at Purfleet. The divisional artillery, composed of the 62nd, 63rd and 64th Brigades, R.F.A., 18-pounders, and the 65th Brigade, R.F.A., 4.5in. howitzers, was formed at Shorncliffe; the 69th, 70th and 87th Field Companies and Divisional Signal Company, R.E., at Hounslow; the 116th, 117th, 118th and 119th Companies, R.A.S.C., at Lord’s Cricket Ground; the 36th, 37th and 38th Field Ambulances, R.A.M.C., at Hounslow. All these troops joined the Division at various times up to January, 1915. The pioneer battalion, 5th Northamptons, reported in February, 1915, but it was not until March, when at Aldershot, that the Division was fully completed by the attachment of “A” Squadron, King Edward’s Horse, the 9th Motor M.G. Battery, the 23rd Sanitary Section and 23rd Mobile Veterinary Section. The Division, which left Aldershot for France on May 29th, 1915, retained its order of battle throughout the war, with the exception that in February, 1918, upon the reduction of brigades from four to three battalions, the 5th Royal Berkshires were transferred from the 35th to the 36th Infantry Brigade, and the remnants of the 7th Suffolks were absorbed into the 1st Cambridgeshires, when the latter joined the Brigade in April, 1918. The 8th Royal Fusiliers, of the 36th Brigade, were also amalgamated with the 9th Royal Fusiliers in February, 1918, whilst the 11th Middlesex were disbanded at the same date. The 7th East Surreys, of the 37th Infantry Brigade,

were also disbanded in February, 1918. The 9th Essex served continuously in the Division from its formation in November, 1914, until its demobilization in April, 1919.

The 12th Division won honourable distinction in the war and its record was shortly but comprehensively reviewed in the farewell order which was issued by the commander, Major-General H. W. Higginson, C.B., D.S.O., when, on March 10th, 1919, he vacated the command upon taking up an appointment with the Army of Occupation on the Rhine: "The months of May, June and July, 1918, were ones of constant vigilance and hard work in the trenches owing to the expected renewal of the German offensive. During this period the Division distinguished itself in several successful raids, which were on a considerable scale. On the 8th August, 1918, you attacked with the rest of the Fourth Army, and during a period of constant hard fighting and attacking almost daily, you drove the enemy from position to position to Vendhuile, which you reached on the 30th September, a distance of 26 miles from your position on the 8th August. You were then transferred to the First Army and went into the line near Lens on the 6th October. The following day the enemy was in retreat in front of you and you drove him back in daily encounters until you reached the line of the River Escaut, a distance of 32 miles from your starting line, on the 27th October, and were relieved there on the 29th. This is the record of the six months' preceding the Armistice. Previous to this the Division played a prominent part in many famous battles. Its achievements at Loos, the Somme, Arras and Cambrai were worthy of its best traditions. Between May, 1915, when the Division first landed in France, and the 11th November, 1918, the Division lost 2,105 officers and 46,038 other ranks in action. This testifies that your laurels have not been lightly earned and to the gallantry and devotion to duty shown by you who have survived the great ordeal, and by those brave comrades who have given their lives for our King and Country, and who, by their sacrifice, have won immortal fame. In a few weeks the Division will have ceased to exist, but wherever our fortunes may lead us in the future we shall all remember with pride the days when we fought in the 12th Division, and will retain the spirit of comradeship and loyalty to each other which has carried us to victory in this Great War."

FORMATION AND TRAINING OF THE 9th ESSEX.

This was the Division of which the 9th Essex was part and the story of the latter, now to be told in detail, will reveal that the men of our County fully upheld the gallant and martial spirit of the people in this great national trial. The war was but a few days old when the command of the new Battalion was given

1. P. 128, "History of the 12th (Eastern) Division."

to Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Lewes, Essex Regiment, who, with the Adjutant (Captain C. C. Spooner), the Quartermaster (Mr. F. Richardson) and the Commanding Officer's servant, was the first arrival at Risborough Barracks, Shorncliffe. On August 26th the Battalion was 100 strong. Within two weeks from that date it numbered 2,000. Batches of men arrived daily from the Depot at Warley, recruited mainly from Grays, Tilbury, Ilford, East Ham, Southend, Romford, Chelmsford, Colchester, Braintree, Witham, Halstead and surrounding districts. Townspeople and countrymen alike had joined in little groups of friends and were wisely kept together as far as possible in their companies and platoons. The numbers were soon reduced by about half by the formation of the 10th Battalion, but even then the task of training this heterogeneous body of men was stupendous. The second-in-command of the Battalion for a few months was Major Sir John Harrington. He had been in charge of the transport arrangements for the British Mission, under Sir Rennell Rodd, to Menelek of Abyssinia in 1897 and became first British Minister to the Court of that King. The company commanders were Captain A. Rome, 20th Punjaubis ("A" Co.), Captain A. T. W. Constable ("B" Co.), Captain R. F. Bury ("C" Co.) and Major H. Copeman ("D" Co.). The regimental sergeant-major was R.S.M. P. Bouttell. Captain Rome soon proceeded to France (where, to the great regret of the Battalion in general and "A" Company in particular, he was killed before Christmas, 1914). Sir John Harrington left to command a newly-formed battalion of the "Die Hards." Major Copeman then became second-in-command and the leadership of "A" and "D" Companies passed to Captains J. Barrett Lennard and C. R. Yates respectively. Captain Constable was promoted major. Several officers and N.C.O.'s were, like the C.O. and Adjutant, from the Regular Battalions of the Essex Regiment, and so, in addition to efficient training, a valuable *esprit de corps* was early instilled into the Battalion. This was a conspicuous feature throughout the war and carried the 9th Essex successfully through many difficult times. The junior officers were drawn largely from the University and public school contingents of the Officers' Training Corps, whilst a few of the seniors had seen service in the South African War. As was fitting, the great public school of the County—Felsted—provided no fewer than five who had been in its training corps. Of these, one was the Adjutant, three others afterwards commanded companies in France, one of whom also commanded the Battalion for nearly six months. The fifth (Captain C. B. Joyner) was unfortunately kept from active service by a serious accident during training. The situation of the Felsted officers was not without its humorous side. Four of them had been masters at the School when the Adjutant was a pupil in the Army Class. One of them recalls that he used to teach the Adjutant

in "Early School," and now found himself being taught by his former pupil at the same time of the day. He was unfortunate enough to be late for this parade one morning and was, quite properly, "told off" by the Adjutant, only to discover, on returning to quarters, that another of the Felsted contingent, finding himself still later for parade, had successfully absented himself from it altogether. This was possible owing to the large number of supernumerary officers at this time. A few days later the Adjutant also failed to arrive in time for his parade. Officers were ordered to fall out and the R.S.M. took charge. The Adjutant received some friendly banter from his former masters on this occasion, but it was paid for by much strenuous doubling before breakfast!

As was to be expected, some officers at first were a little unmilitary in many ways. Such remarks to a full company on parade as "It shows a slovenly disposition to appear on parade unshaven" were soon abandoned for less polite but more effective speech in plain English. On one occasion wood fighting was being practised and the Acting C.O. gave orders that there were to be "casualties" among officers. One company was seen to be going altogether astray and the Adjutant was sent to find out why. The following conversation was overheard:—

Adjutant: The C.O. wishes to see you, Captain X.

Captain X: Oh, but I'm a casualty.

Adjutant: Where is Captain Y, then?

Captain X: He is a casualty, too.

Adjutant: Who the ——— is in command of your company, then?

Captain X: I am afraid I don't know. I have been a casualty some time and have passed on the order about casualties to my successor. (Exit Adjutant wrathfully).

Again, the parade is "Outposts." The Company commander is going round finding out which piquets the sentries are from and questioning them on their duties.

Company Commander (to sentry, wishing to know the number of his piquet): Where do you come from?

Sentry (without a moment's hesitation and in a loud voice): Sarthend, sir.

Another officer recalls a company parade which was spent mainly in the Company Commander trying to get his men to "Present arms" from the "Stand at ease" and loudly discussing, not without the use of Latin quotations, with his C.S.M. as to the number of motions in which it should be performed.

"A hint that it might be possible to get a job—after several ineffectual attempts at the War Office—brought me to Shorncliffe, one day in September, 1914," wrote Captain J. Barrett Lennard. "I found myself one of a large crowd of all sorts and conditions of men on the way from Shorncliffe Station to the camp of the

9th (Service) Battalion of The Essex Regiment. It was already full of men, although only a day or two after its formation. The sign 'Orderly Room,' a few minutes' conversation with the C.O., consisting of rapid questions and answers as to experience, and I was ordered—first order received—to go before the doctor. If passed by him I could join up as Captain straight away. In half an hour I was able to report that the doctor had passed me fit. I went to London to order uniform and returned to camp next day to start duty. I may mention that many weeks afterwards the War Office notified me that I had been appointed to two other regiments. At this time the only persons in uniform were the C.O., the Adjutant, a major in the 2nd Battalion and two or three N.C.O.'s. The rest of us turned out on parade in any sort of clothing but a silk hat."

It was towards the end of October when Major Copeman joined the 9th Essex at Shorncliffe. He remembers that "D" Company was not then up to its full strength and its second-in-command, in the forties, was a business man with Yeomanry experience in South Africa. Of the subalterns, one was a schoolmaster, another had taken honours in history at Oxford and was of Australian birth. The others were keen young men, one of them with engineering knowledge. Of the other ranks, the C.S.M. was an ex-regular who had served with him in South Africa as C.S.M. of the Essex Company of the Burma Mounted Infantry and the C.Q.M.S. had joined the 2nd Battalion in Cyprus in 1890. There was a sprinkling of old regulars and the rest were recruits from all classes. Some could not be even issued with the blue jumpers that were worn. All were using their own boots—more or less dilapidated—and their own greatcoats." Officers also remember various lectures on the latest edition of "Notes from the Front" as they came out, each more or less contradicting the previous edition. As lighter forms of evening amusement, there were dinners and dancing at the Folkestone hotels.

Equipment was gradually obtained by some means or other, though boots were not issued till November 14th and great coats till December 7th. It was a wonderfully fine autumn, but at the end of October the weather became wet and windy. A recruit of "A" Company wrote to an Essex paper, under date September, 1914, "The majority of the soldiers sleep in tents. It is not too cold at nights, but it is rather uncomfortable when it rains. The camp is an exceedingly healthy one, as the air is so strong and the troops are on a hill close to the sea. We have to work pretty hard. First parade is from 6 to 7 a.m.; breakfast 7 to 8; second parade 8 till 12.30; dinner time 12.30 to 2 o'clock. Then we have another parade from 2 till 4.30, when we finish for the day. Twice a week we get a night manœuvre for an hour or two and twice a week we get a route march varying from eight to ten miles." The congestion in camp was accentuated by the fact that the Battalion "doubled up," in barracks and under

canvas, with the 5th Royal Berkshires, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Foley. Physical instruction was a great feature of these early weeks and this story would not be complete without mention of the physical training instructor, who was a great character and who was largely responsible for the rapidity with which every man in the Battalion became fit and active enough to stand the strenuous training as well as more fitted mentally to benefit by it. By October and November the men were considerably hardened, but when the break of the weather came they were sorely tried. Another trial at first was climbing the Downs on route marches, but the men soon grew accustomed to it. The training, though strenuous, was thoroughly enjoyed, so keen was the spirit, the critical events afoot being brought home by test mobilizations and rumours of moves to less healthy zones. The Battalion finished its musketry course by November 27th by using one set of rifles passed from company to company. Periodical scares added realism to the training. On one occasion warning came of a possible attempt at landing by the enemy. A hastily propounded scheme of defence entailed some clearing and trench digging near the Canal. This was carried out in a thorough manner, much to the annoyance of various high officials, who may have known that the risk of a landing was remote, but had omitted to let the Battalion's senior officers know that such was the case.

Blankets were difficult to obtain through the ordinary channels, but some friends bought large numbers at London shops and they were in use and much appreciated long before the authorities had ceased to say that they were "absolutely unobtainable." Then, again, it was decreed that the men should be induced, but not compelled, to be inoculated against enteric fever. It was sufficient in most cases to state the matter plainly and concisely, but there were some whom it was not easy to persuade. In one company an afternoon parade was held by the C.S.M., at which doubling was the most strenuous feature. At each halt for breath it was stated that the men who were for inoculation were to fall out and very few men were left at the end of that parade. On another occasion, after the Company Commander had spoken, the first volunteer was the official "bad hat," a bargee, who could neither read nor write. His example, however, had an excellent effect. The Battalion had not been long in France before the man was wounded and, later, he was again seriously wounded.

Giving further details of the moulding of the men into the Battalion, an officer of the 9th writes: "The later Service Battalions of the Regiment in due course took some of our officers and men, but my recollection is that in September there were far more than the establishment of a battalion, and of this crowd very few had the smallest idea or experience of soldiering, but each company had at least one or two N.C.O.'s, who were actually

serving or had served. Very fortunately, the C.O. had absolutely clear views as to what was required and how he proposed to put them into effect. He never drilled squads or commanded companies; he was neither musketry instructor nor Quartermaster. He carved the great mob into four parts, called each a company, and instructed his company commanders to make them into real companies—so that each man at once knew what his job was, even if he did not know how to do it. After that he saw that his company commanders acted on the same principle, right down to section leaders. Time was very short, and so much more had to be done. Having established order, it was then possible to proceed with the selection of men of all ranks for instruction as specialists. Of course, there was a lack or insufficiency of everything else besides uniform—rifles to train men in the handling, for instance—so it was possible to press with extreme vigour drill and those almost mysterious exercises which in the end convert a mob of willing men into the perfectly disciplined battalion of soldiers. I know the C.O. realised that with every other disadvantage under which he struggled he had one great advantage—and that was that every single man under him had willingly come there to learn. As rather an old boy, it was vastly interesting to me to see how constantly he bore that in mind, and how ready he was to overlook wildness, temper, even stupidity, as long as the offender was keen.

“There were plenty of humorous experiences and some tragic. For instance, I had a man in my company whom I liked very much, but he was frequently absent without leave and was no favourite at the orderly room. I could get no explanation out of him of his frequent absences, and in the end he absented himself after we had notice to embark, and he became guilty of the more serious offence of desertion. But an hour or two before entraining he turned up and went promptly under arrest for desertion. When we disembarked at Boulogne, my C.S.M. and I dragged out from him at last the reason for all these crimes. He had enlisted at the first call—leaving a delicate wife and child who had no other soul to look after them—both got ill and he faced the consequences and absented himself to give them a look. He had been told the penalty for desertion on active service and still deserted, but came back in time to show he was not afraid. The C.O. listened to the story I had to tell him and ——— was never tried for desertion. Punishments to fit the crime had to be, but I do not remember one single case in which a man thought he had been treated unjustly. The result was that the men were doing all they could to learn and took all that was coming to them with a good spirit. And it was stiff work. Up with the lark and out all day and at night to listen to lectures, keeping eyes and ears open, was in itself no mean task. Among the younger officers it was inevitable that there should be a few cases of zeal untempered by discretion,

but almost without exception junior officers took their gruel like the other ranks, with perfect good humour. Not only the commander of the Company, but every single man in it, was proud when it heard that it alone had had no one drop out on a march. And not only the C.O., but the Battalion was tickled to death when the C.O. was told by the Brigadier that the other battalions had had many more casualties from the same cause. My second captain had tennis elbow, a ricked knee, alleged heart disease and bad gout. He was very tall, but the doctor had apparently overlooked him when he went up for examination. The first parade before breakfast I had arranged to be a steady double round and round the parade ground—I do not know how many of the Company liked it, but my second captain loathed it. Moreover, he knew I knew all about his gout and though he said little about it, I think he must have wondered whether our close friendship, almost lifelong, was a mere dream. So long as he was not under the M.O., nothing could keep him off parade—until I was obliged on one occasion to forbid his intention of taking the Company in my absence—in a *bath chair*! I had already gone so far as to allow him to drive in a taxi to the place of assembly—for a field day—but I knew that sooner or later the C.O. would have something to say to me. I thought that bath chair would probably lead to a scene in the Orderly Room. Usual formula, via Adjutant, ‘The Colonel wishes to see you in the Orderly Room,’ a slight but significant difference from the usual formula, ‘The Colonel *will* see,’ etc. We had many foretastes of the discomfort of service overseas. I remember a practice of occupation of unknown trenches at night. The night selected was pitch dark, and buckets of rain. The trenches had been made in the daytime—a beautifully straight line. My Company advanced in perfect line also and arrived as a body in the trenches. There was one very bad ‘plop.’ The trenches were full of water. Very cold water, or the language used would have dried them up.”

Christmas “leave” came quite unexpectedly, but was, nevertheless, fully appreciated and was held by some to be an indication of an early embarkation, which was, however, not the fact. The next move was not to France, but to Aldershot, whither the whole Division was transferred. The 9th Essex left Shorncliffe on Tuesday, February 23rd. Billeting at Ashford, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Redhill, Leatherhead and Woking on successive nights, they reached Blenheim Barracks, Aldershot, about noon on Monday, March 1st. In spite of the trying conditions, including a fall of snow, not a man of the Battalion fell out during the 120 miles march. The men were greatly helped by the kindly treatment of the inhabitants whom they met *en route*. Just before Dorking was reached the command was suddenly passed along the ranks to march at attention and before all ranks became fully aware of the fact, they were swinging past Lord Kitchener, who was standing at the roadside,



THE OFFICERS, 9th (SERVICE) BATTALION THE ESSEX REGIMENT, ALDERSHOT, 1915.

Back Row : 2nd Lieuts. J. D. Berry, L. M. Elworthy, E. B. Hichor, J. A. Jarrett, I. W. Mett, G. J. Hancock, C. L. Wilson, S. Henderson, R. D. Hickson,
 Lieut. H. C. Mears, 2nd Lieut. R. G. H. Cohen, R. P. Sewell, N. J. Stevers, N. R. Upton, D. Freeman,
 Second Row : 2nd Lieuts. J. Welford-Brown, C. R. Brown, W. Noble, Lieut. H. F. Green, A. C. Woodhouse, Mr. F. Richardson,
 G. G. Dixon, J. G. Bull, Lieut. G. M. F. Richardson, Lieut. Col. C. G. Lewis, Capt. C. C. Spooner,
 Third Row : Capt. E. Gramshaw, C. R. Yates, J. Burrell, Lieut. M. H. C. Cohen, Major A. F. Constable, Capt. R. F. Burd, Capt. G. Green,
 Front Row : 2nd Lieuts. F. J. Walters, S. H. Scaillie, A. E. C. S. Thurnburn, E. D. Restall.



9th (Service) Battalion The Essex Regiment at Aldershot May, 1915.

accompanied by half a dozen staff officers. No one knew that the War Secretary was in the neighbourhood and none could tell from his inscrutable countenance what his feelings or impressions were. At Aldershot field training took place in grim earnest, lasting from early morning to late afternoon. In April, 1915, the Battalion went out to billets at Finchampstead and Eversley for divisional operations, returning later for special manœuvres before H.M. the King. The Battalion was also inspected by the Colonel of the Essex Regiment, Major-General F. Ventris, C.B., who expressed appreciation at being asked to visit the 9th Battalion and congratulating everyone on the smartness and general efficiency of all ranks. The Battalion at this date was described as fine and well disciplined, if not as completely trained, as any battalion in the British Army, and this as the result of only nine months' work. Impending departure became the more certain with the advent of May, for first the 9th (Highland) Division moved away to France, then the 14th also passed over the Channel. Final leave warned the 9th Essex that the 12th Division's turn was soon to come. The waiting was wearisome, but the great day surely dawned. On May 24th Lieut. Sewell proceeded to Boulogne for entrainment duty with the 12th Divisional staff and on May 29th the transport, consisting of 78 horses, 24 vehicles and 109 rank and file, under Major Constable, Lieut. Bearblock and Lieut. Upton, left Farnborough for Havre. The next day the first part of the Battalion—Battalion headquarters and "A" and "B" Companies (14 officers and 440 rank and file)—entrained at Government siding, Aldershot, followed by a second train with "C" and "D" Companies (12 officers and 844 rank and file). The whole Battalion embarked on the "Queen" at Folkestone—full of memories, now to become even more memorable. The Channel was as calm as a millstream and shortly before midnight the 7th Suffolks disembarked at Boulogne, followed by the 9th Essex. Though somewhat weary, the Battalion faced the stiff march up the hill to the rest camp near Orthes in the best of spirits, for all ranks were proud of the fact that at last they were "Somewhere in France." The total of all ranks upon embarkation was 935—30 officers, one warrant officer, 58 sergeants, 89 corporals and 812 privates. The officers were: Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Lewes (in command), Major H. C. Copeman (second-in-command), Major A. T. W. Constable (commanding "B" Company), Captain and Adjutant C. C. Spooner, Captain R. F. Bury (commanding "C" Company), Captain J. Barrett Lennard (commanding "A" Company), Captain C. R. Yates (commanding "D" Company), Captains G. Green, H. L. Watt s E. Gramshaw, Lieuts. H. C. Myers, D. Freeman, J. G. Bullen, H. E. Griggs, G. G. Dixon, N. J. Sievers, A. C. Woodhouse, R. P. Sewell, C. H. Bearblock, N. R. Upton, 2nd Lieuts. C. R. Brown, G. J. Hancock, S. Henderson, E. B. Hickox, F. J. Walters, C. L. Wilson, L. M. Elworthy, Quartermaster, Hon. Lieut. F. Richardson, and Medical Officer, Lieut. A. C. Giles, R.A.M.C.

IN FRANCE.

On June 1st the Battalion marched to the railway station at Pont du Briques and entered the same train that brought the transport from Havre. It detrained after a journey in open trucks which had more novelty than comfort at Lumbres and marched to billets at Leuline, Audenthun, Etrehem and Leulinghem, with headquarters at the first-named village. After four days' stay the 9th Essex, moving towards the front with the Division, entered upon one of their most trying experiences on June 5th and 6th, when they marched on the first day to Wardrecques, and on the second day to Borre. Though the weather was hot and close, the Battalion was not unduly tried on the first day, but on June 6th the twenty miles tramp on the pavé roads was an experience which none who took part in it ever forgot. The 9th Essex were the last unit in the Brigade to move and after about an hour a halt was called, which those in the rear understood would be of half an hour's duration. Hot tea was issued, when suddenly the whistle sounded the fall-in and off the Battalion marched. Things went fairly well for a time, but as the sun waxed in strength the heat became oppressive, being over 90° in the shade, and the dust hung in a cloud over the column without a puff of wind to clear it away. The omission of the customary halts added to the distress. The Division was in a hurry to reach its rendezvous. "We passed men," wrote an officer, "who had fallen out. Then some of ours dropped to the rear before actually falling out. Officers could be seen carrying men's rifles and encouraging them to hold out; but as the march continued, matters became worse. Men staggered out of the ranks and fell down as if in a fit. Like all things, the march came to an end at last, but many never got over it and some men died."

The Battalion went into billets at Pont de Nieppe on June 7th, for a week, during which time Captain R. F. Bury left for the 11th (S.) Battalion South Lancashires and Captain G. Green succeeded to the command of "C" Company. The Division, which had its headquarters at Nieppe, was to be trained in trench warfare and the 9th Essex accordingly marched on June 14th to Petit Pont, which lay three miles south-east of Neuve Eglise, Belgium. There the Battalion came under the orders of the 145th Brigade, 48th Division (T.F.), for instruction until June 18th and under those of the 144th Brigade from June 18th to 20th. During this period the bivouac was in Ploegsteert Wood. One company went into the trenches at a time for twenty-four hours, commencing with "A" Company, and a platoon was attached to each company of the Battalion (5th Gloucesters) holding the trenches in continuation of the line north of Ploegsteert

Wood. Each man was attached to a man of the instructing unit, so that the points of trench warfare could be learnt first hand. When the companies had finished their rotation of trench duty, two companies went in together (June 18th), when two platoons were attached to each company of the Gloucesters, and each platoon worked on its own, but with a platoon of the instructing battalion on each side. When not in the trenches, companies were lectured by officers and N.C.O.'s upon trench warfare by instructors of the Gloucesters or 1st Bucks. When "A" Company were in the trenches on June 15th the 9th Essex suffered their first casualties from enemy action, when Privates F. A. Byrne and G. Cox were killed by a high explosive shell bursting on top of the dug-out. "I well remember the first night in Ploegsteert Wood," wrote a member of the Battalion, "when we were near enough to get spent bullets and an occasional shell. Bivouacs were made of branches cut from the trees. They were picturesque, but failed to keep out the numerous insects. A shell fell near enough to have deprived us of most of the personnel of the Battalion headquarters had it exploded. One man woke in the morning to find he had a bullet in his foot, much to his surprise. The first visit to the trenches while under instruction seemed a terrible adventure. No communication trench; bullets apparently whistling all around, but actually probably yards above our heads. The peacefulness of the life in the trenches was a great surprise. Was this war?"

The instructional period soon passed and the Division had not long to wait before it was made wholly responsible for a portion of the line. It lay north-east of Armentieres and ran into Ploegsteert Wood, with which all ranks had been familiarized. On June 25th, 26th and 27th the 37th Brigade (right) and 36th Brigade took over from the 46th Division, the 35th Brigade remaining in G.H.Q. line as divisional reserve. When, a few days later, the Canadian Corps relieved part of the 36th Brigade, the 12th Division performed similar service to the 27th Division and the line then ran from the Lys to Ploegsteert Wood. The trench system thereabouts was made familiar by the many London names which had been applied by the 46th Division. They included such strange contrasts as Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Circus and the Strand. The 9th Essex were in billets at Pont de Nieppe from June 19th to the early days of July, when the 35th Brigade took over from the 37th Brigade. With the 5th Berkshires, the Essex were in brigade reserve until July 10th, but so near the line that spent bullets reached headquarters billets in Ploegsteert village. When the Battalion relieved the 7th Suffolks comparative quiet reigned. "In taking over a part of the line," wrote an officer, "the worst time seemed to be the six days out rather than the six days in. The former were spent in preparing ourselves for future events, in a strenuous

fashion, but we managed to get a couple of cricket matches in and altogether life was peaceful. The dear old convent and burnt out farmhouse and the Battalion headquarters surrounded by places named after our own County, reminding us that the 2nd Battalion had been there before us, all crop up in the memory. And what a fine communication trench our pioneers made!" Although there was not much hostile action, yet there was a good deal of bickering and constant warfare against snipers. Lieut. H. E. Griggs, with his bomb throwers and four snipers, patrolled No Man's Land—which at this point was about 400 yards wide—on the night when the Battalion entered the trenches and a sniper's nest was found cleverly concealed in the long grass. The enemy were actively employed during the day upon the repair of parapets and construction of communication trenches, but the line did not appear to be held in strength at night. This impression was confirmed a night or two later, when another party, consisting of 2nd Lieutenant C. R. Brown, Sergeant Coombes, Lance-Corporal Barnes and Private H. England, went on patrol and reached the German entanglements, portions of which were cut and brought back as specimens of the enemy's handiwork. An even more daring reconaissance was made on July 12th, when Sergeant Day and Lance-Corporal Mann, in broad daylight, got within 25 yards of the enemy's trenches. The patrol work of the 9th Essex was not only active and plucky, but informative. When Lieut. Sievers and Lance-Corporal Chilvers went out on July 14th they examined the left end of a German T-shaped trench and found that entanglements were very thick and that the grass in front was cut. What appeared to be a machine gun emplacement had been constructed in the centre of the forward trench. Again, another patrol (C.S.M. Goldsmith and Sergeant Day) reported they found frequent gaps in the German wire and they even saw a sniper in a pit at the base of the parapet using sighting apparatus and then firing through the long grass. They got close enough for the conversation in the trenches to be overheard by a listener with a knowledge of German. 2nd-Lieut. Henderson and Sergeant Wilkinson were also actively employed in gathering information, but more drastic measures were taken on July 16th, when 2nd Lieut. Brown's party exploded 15lb. of guncotton in front of the enemy's trench at about midnight, the party slipping back under cover of a machine gun. The extent of the damage was not ascertained, but it was thought to be considerable. When the Battalion did its next tour of trench duty, two of the snipers caught a hostile sniper in a tree. They got within ninety yards of him ere they fired and killed him. Extensive use was made by the enemy of carrier pigeons. The Essex were once again in the line in the latter half of August and had companies of the 13th K.R.R. attached for instructional purposes. A massively-built structure was observed in the enemy's parapet, a mystery which

had been also reported elsewhere and which it was conjectured was an emplacement for a field gun. There was an aperture at the bottom of the parapet about 12ft. long and 8ft. high covered by a curtain of empty sandbags and concealed to some extent by the wire entanglements. The aperture was heavily sandbagged on top and on either side, whilst the head cover appeared to be about 12ft. broad. The British artillery endeavoured to destroy it by firing 17 high explosive shells, but unfortunately they did not obtain a direct hit. At the close of the month the Battalion had another turn in relief of 7th Suffolks, strengthened by a draft of 108 other ranks from the base. Lieutenants Griggs and Sievers and Sergeant Barry visited a German trench in No Man's Land on August 29th, which was of considerable dimensions. It had not been recently used except a portion immediately in front of the parapet, where some cartridge cases, clean and bright, were found, presumably left by snipers. A trophy was secured in the form of a German helmet, then highly esteemed as souvenirs. The next day Lieutenants Brown and Noble and C.S.M. Goldsmith explored another similar trench, but examination was difficult owing to the trip wires and wire hoops with which it was guarded. The patrol was discovered, too, and bombed, but escaped without casualty.

Recalling this period of service, Major G. Green writes : "What a day it was when the gunners told us that at last they were allowed to fire off some H.E., a whole 17 rounds, as more was now available in large quantities ! All the staff came up to see the fun and the first round burst just over their heads in our front line, of which the gunners had previously warned me they were not unexpectant, as they had never fired any like it before. Then the enormous bomb stores we made, to hold the bombs which were 'coming,' and which, meanwhile, contained one bomb per bomber, no two alike. These were solemnly taken out at morning and evening "stand to," caressed and replaced. Next occurs one evening when a mine was exploded on the Canadians' front on our left. It seemed to be near enough to be in our trenches, but behold it was a mile away. This, however, caused some liveliness by the enemy on our front and we had our first 'Man the parapet' and 'Rapid fire.' Ten minutes to a quarter of an hour's excitement and then peace again. As an instance of the state of munition supply at the time, it is worth recording that great excitement was caused by a message from the Adjutant saying 'Fifteen rifle grenades will be sent up to you to-night. Please see that they are all fired at the enemy's lines before relief.' They were and approximately 1,500 were fired back in reply, many landing right into the trenches, but fortunately all in a part deserted for the moment on account of the section being on some duty elsewhere. A good deal of damage was done to equipment and such corrugated iron shelters as were there. In these days enemy snipers were a serious

thing in trench life. It was quite uncanny how they hit small objects like periscope mirrors and small loopholes in enormous steel frames, such as were then in use in our parapets and which were such a labour to build into the parapet at night under machine gun fire and which usually had to be abandoned as unsafe as soon as once used, since when opened for use they received bullets from the enemy, which usually came straight in. Among other implements of warfare one remembers the bomb catapult, which probably caused more casualties to us than to the enemy, and the 'sniperscope,' which was quite amusing and safe, but probably did not do much damage. We were still inexperienced in many ways and this probably cost us most of the casualties which happened in this period. As an example, we were deprived of a valuable officer in Captain Freeman, who lost his arm by gallantly going over the parapet after what he thought to be an enemy in our wire. The supposed enemy was one of our sentries, who should have been stationary in a 'listening post' out in our wire, but who crawled out after what he thought to be an enemy cutting the wire. So that each took the other for an enemy and opened fire. Such unfortunate events must occur in war and were not unknown in other battalions in our immediate neighbourhood in these times. A more pleasant memory will occur to a few who were present, namely, that of Horace Griggs' twenty-first birthday dinner at Salford village while out of the line. The present writer has the menu card with signatures of those present now beside him as he writes. Alas, the survivors are few. There was always the 'daily hate' of the village of Ploegsteert to look forward to, in case of boredom, and various scares about natives being spies and sending messages to the enemy and acting as snipers at night relieved the monotony. One farm, which had, strangely enough, never been shelled, contained a farmer who continued to carry on his agricultural pursuits to within half a mile from the line, with three sons, who were very much alike in size and attire. It was said that they all three went out during the afternoon and then one came in at dusk, passed through the house and came round and in the same door twice, so that our sentry thought all three were in. Meanwhile, the other two were out all night firing at ration parties, etc. I do not like to spoil this good story by saying that I am afraid it is not true. Good old Plugstreet. Unpleasant enough at the time, but now only to be considered as the tamest part of the British front the 9th Battalion ever saw."

THE BATTLE OF LOOS.

The Battle of Loos was a joint operation with the French and the front ran from Ecurle, near Neuville St. Vaast, on the right, to Haisnes, near La Bassée, on the left. The offensive started on September 25th, 1915, and continued for a month, the definite result being the occupation of Vimy Ridge by the French and of

Loos and Hulluch by the British. Much more was expected at one time. The opening movement was so successful in the Loos area—particularly the advance of the 9th (Scottish) Division, which at one time penetrated to a depth of four miles—that had adequate supports been available at the time when needed, the whole German line in this sector would have gone. As it was, the enemy counter-attacked with skill and pertinacity and recovered most of the lost ground. The disappointment at the net result of the fighting was very considerable, because high hopes had been engendered by the brilliantly heroic exploit of the attacking divisions. It came so near to being an outstanding triumph.

The 12th Division was not employed in the first attack. It was attached to the Second Army, then lying east and north of Armentieres, and its co-operation was limited to the emission of a smoke screen, which was designed to mislead the enemy as to where the main effort was to fall. On September 26th, however, the Division proceeded to the Lillers-Choques area, cheered by the optimistic feeling then prevailing. The great and, as it proved, culminating effort had been made, however, when the Division was ordered into the line in relief of the Guards Division on the night of September 30th-October 1st. There was nearly a month's fighting ere operations ended, but it was mainly confined to maintaining the positions already secured and to resisting a formidable counter-attack. The Division was unfortunate enough to lose its commander, Major-General F. D. V. Wing, C.B., C.M.G., who was killed on the afternoon of October 2nd, whilst on a tour of inspection of the field batteries, the siting of which was a matter of difficulty to the staff. A German shell fell in front of him and his *aide-de-camp*, Lieut. C. C. Tower, Essex Yeomanry—eldest son of the late Mr. C. J. H. Tower, of Weald Hall, Brentwood—and slew both of them. General Wing had seen active service in the South African War, for which he received a brevet lieutenant-colonelcy and the C.B. As commander of the artillery of the 3rd Division he was present at the retreat from Mons and did so well that he was appointed to command the 12th Division. He was succeeded next day by Major-General A. B. Scott, C.B., D.S.O., who had been sent to France, as C.R.A., Meerut Division. He remained in command until April, 1918, a period of two and a half years. The Division was three weeks on the battle front and lost in killed and wounded 117 officers and 3,237 other ranks—a fifth of its personnel.

When the 12th Division went into the line east and north-east of Loos, on the night of September 30th-October 1st, it had the 35th Brigade on the right, with the 12th (French) Division as neighbours, and the 36th Brigade on the left, with the 37th Brigade in reserve at Vermelles. The front line ran from a point east of Loos and about half-way between the town and the crest of Hill 70 northward to the south-east corner of Chalkpit Wood.

along the eastern edge of the Wood, round the Chalkpit, and then in a north-westerly direction, in semi-circular form, to a point 800 yards of Benifontaine. The support line ran northward from Loos along the Loos-La Bassée Road, whilst the third line was the original German front trench. For the first few days the men were busily employed in consolidating the position. More exciting service was quickly to follow, for on October 5th the Division had been moved to a position which ran from the south of the Vermelles-Hulluch road to a point opposite the Quarries. The latter, a crucial point of the German defence, had been captured in the first rush, but had been retaken, and it was intended, if possible, to seize Gun Trench, which was so sited to give considerable observation over the low-lying country. The task was deputed to units of the 87th Brigade, but before it began the Germans launched a heavy counter-attack on October 8th practically all along the new front, which was repulsed with great slaughter. Although the enemy offensive made it difficult for the attack of the 87th Brigade to be carried out, it was persisted in and the 6th Royal West Kents obtained a footing in Gun Trench, only to be compelled to retire later owing to failure in the supply of hand grenades. The 46th Division was pitted against Hohenzollern Redoubt and Fosse and the 12th Division was again sent against Gun Trench and the Quarries on October 18th. The 87th Brigade was allotted the former objective and succeeded in occupying it, but was stayed from further advance. The 85th Brigade, on the left, had the more speculative task of seizing the Quarries and in which they made what the Corps Commander described as "an important and successful advance." Although the Germans retained the greater part of the Quarries, yet they had to surrender the south-western face, with a portion of the centre and the greater part of the north-western face, later to become more familiar as Hairpin Trench. The attack was entrusted to the 7th Norfolks, 5th Berkshires and 7th Suffolks, and at night they were relieved in the captured positions by the 9th Royal Fusiliers of the 86th Brigade on the right and the 9th Essex on the left. On October 19th the 9th Essex repelled a fierce counter-attack and there was further desultory fighting. The main battle, however, was over and on October 21st the Division was relieved by the 15th (Scottish) Division and went into rest billets near Fouquieres-lez-Bethune.

Now for the story of the 9th Essex in greater detail. The Battalion was in the line when the Loos attack began and at 5.55 a.m. on September 25th, after an hour's bombardment, a smoke curtain was created, part of a similar movement all along the front, in order to conceal the points where the British offensive would be launched. Bundles of wet straw were soaked in paraffin, lighted and then thrown over the parapet, one bundle being used to every yard of trench; this was supplemented by a discharge of smoke bombs. A dense cloud was produced in

a few minutes, which rose to a height of 50ft., and then, guided by a favourable wind, drifted slowly toward the enemy lines. The alarm among the Germans was considerable. A bell was rung and rapid rifle and machine gun fire was opened on the parapet, to which the four Battalion weapons replied. Then, following a red rocket, the hostile artillery opened with a steady fire upon the front and support trenches and various other points. Lawrence Farm East was struck by a 15 c.m. high explosive shell, which set the building on fire and burnt it to the ground, a number of packs and a quantity of material being lost. The enemy guns continued their accurate fire and several direct hits were obtained on the trenches, which caused a score of casualties. When 130 shells had been discharged, the hostile fire died down. In the afternoon the 9th Essex annoyed the enemy by short bursts from rifles and machine guns, which roused him to renewed activity. The Germans fired another thirty shells in the evening and in the early morning of the 26th they varied the medicine by discharging trench howitzer "sausages." The Battalion casualties comprised two other ranks killed and 22 wounded. On the evening of September 26th the Essex were relieved by the 15th Canadians and marched into billets at Westhof Camp, which they reached early on the following morning. In the afternoon of the 27th the Battalion moved to billets in Merris, where the Brigade was concentrated in Corps reserve. By motor 'bus the 35th Brigade was conveyed south, the Battalion resting the night in billets at L'Ecleme. Next day, in wet and cold weather, La Bourse was reached by route march, with a bivouac in a field for two companies and close billets in a girls' school for the remainder. Then on September 30th the Essex marched, with the Brigade, along the Lens Road and took over the second line of defence, north of Loos, from the Scots Guards. Headquarters and "A" and "C" Companies were in this second line, with "B" and "D" Companies in the third line at Loos Road redoubt, with Brigade headquarters in a house on the west side of the Loos-la Bassée road.

FIRST VIEW OF A MODERN BATTLEFIELD.

"The move to Loos," wrote Major Green, "was partly a march in very bad weather and partly a ride in 'buses. We did not know much of the situation at the time and consequently were surprised at the lack of billets on reaching La Bourse. The divisional general (Major-General Wing) stopped his car during our halt at Nœux-les-Mines and had a cheery word with the officers. We always felt better for having seen him and his death soon after was very keenly felt. Another cheering sight was our first meeting a batch of German prisoners. Things seemed to be going well as far as we could see. But billets were bad or non-existent. One officer refused a bed which it was said afterwards that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales willingly accepted

on the following night. He had been on the battlefield we were soon to visit. We passed him on the way up on September 30th. He looked very tired and was smothered with mud, walking alone along the street of La Bourse. Officers would have liked to have called their men to attention and given him a salute, but he showed by his manner that he would not have wished to inconvenience the men, who were heavily laden, in this way. A few hours' rest and then an early morning ride to reconnoitre the Guards' trenches. We rode right up to the crest of the hill overlooking Loos before it was realized that we came in view of the enemy on Hill 70, which was understood by now to be in our hands. It was soon evident that this was not the case and, hurriedly dismounting and sending the horses back, we crawled along ditches and trenches down into the hollow by a hay stack to meet the brigade-major of the Guards. We now had our first view of a modern battlefield before clearing. Bodies of men lay strewn about. Dead horses, limbers smashed to pieces and indescribable muddle and odour remain in the memory. The same night the whole Division marched up to take over the line. The march seemed interminable and the darkness and confusion made the task very difficult. We were not settled till 2 a.m. on October 1st."

The first day was spent in clearing the battlefield and improving the trench, which was merely a 3ft. ditch dug in the chalk. It was then thought that the chalky soil provided ideal surface drainage and prevented the trenches becoming waterlogged, but "that was written," said a member of the Battalion "before we had experience of the trenches of the same district in their mud-logged condition." During the night of October 2nd-3rd a working party of 400, under Major Copeman, commenced a new trench on the western side of Chalkpit. Several casualties ensued from the enfilading of the second line trench by shrapnel from a field gun battery south-east of Loos on October 3rd, on the night of which the Battalion went into the front line, with headquarters in an old kiln near the Chalkpit. Shelling was continuous and "D" Company suffered somewhat the next day. The trenches were shallow, the parapets low, there were no dug-outs and no fires were allowed to attract enemy attention. Sniping added to the troubles and on October 5th an enemy marksman was located at a spot south-west of Hulluch and two Germans were shot in the same neighbourhood by the Essex snipers. That day Captain H. E. Griggs was shot through the head with a rifle bullet, owing to the shallowness of the trenches—"a valuable intelligence officer and a cheery friend." When that night the Battalion was moved out of the line, the casualties totalled 13 other ranks killed and 57 wounded. By way of Loos, the Essex marched to billets at Vermelles Halte. Whilst there the enemy, on the afternoon of October 8th, made a strong counter-attack against positions west of Hulluch, which was accompanied by heavy cannonade upon the front and

support lines, also in the Vermelles area. The railway station and the mine yard, where half the Battalion were billeted, were subjected to slow, continuous fire by 7.7. and 10 c.m. H.E., which caused a dozen casualties, whilst two civilians—many of whom still remained in the battle zone—were also hit. Effective retaliation followed from the British artillery, after which the Essex moved into a communication trench on the north side of the halte and bivouacked there. There were alarms during the night, but nothing more, and on the morning of October 9th the Battalion moved to new billets at Noyelles les Vermelles, one company, however, remaining at the station. The old British trenches were occupied on October 12th, in readiness for the attack upon the Quarries the next day. There the Essex were shelled and suffered some loss, the casualties including Major A. T. W. Constable, who was mortally wounded in the head whilst standing above the congested trenches in the darkness directing operations. As the attack was delivered the Battalion moved forward, about 1.30 p.m., to occupy the trenches which the Suffolks and Berkshires had vacated for their advance. Several of the communication trenches were impassable on account of the heavy bombardment and this made movement extremely difficult. Two companies ("C" and "D"), however, less parties detailed for water and bomb-carrying, eventually reached a trench turning out of Breslau Avenue, where they remained, under Major Copeman, in support of the Berkshires, until they relieved the Suffolks in the Hairpin Trench, which was effected by 4 a.m. on October 14th. Meanwhile, the remaining companies found a small vacant portion of the old German line, except for a machine gun of the South Staffords, and occupied it until moved into the captured trenches. The next three days were spent in consolidation, including the construction by the R.E. of a strongpoint. There was almost continuous bombing. "This was our first real part in an attack at its commencement. We went into it as lightly equipped as possible, notably without shaving kit, and when we came out nine days later we were a terrifying sight to all beholders. One sergeant is remembered as looking so ape-like that one of the Scotsmen who relieved us said, 'What's that? Yer mascot?'"

It was determined to seize the whole of the trench on the south-western face of the Quarries and accordingly bombing squads from several regiments, under 2nd Lieut. Walters, supported by a platoon of "D" Company, were deputed to make the attack, on October 18th, with a section of R.E. in their rear, for consolidation purposes, and also another platoon of the Essex to reinforce, if required. The details were carefully worked out. Arrangements were made for up and down traffic. Bomb and water dumps were fixed and a supply of tools placed in readiness. Bombing squads were also stationed at other posts to resist attack and machine guns were placed in

commanding positions. A trench mortar was posted to destroy the barricade. Everything worked according to plan. A desperate fight ensued and the enemy, strongly resisting, were driven back all along the trench. Eventually, owing to officer casualties, the barricade was erected just short of the full objective and the trench—to be known later as Essex Trench—was consolidated. The behaviour of the men throughout was excellent. The platoons of “D” Company worked all night under the direction of Captain H. L. Watts and were of great assistance to the Royal Engineers. By next morning the work on the trench had been completed and caused much anxiety to the enemy, who still held portions of the Quarries. On October 19th “C” Company relieved “D” Company and had to endure merciless shelling from the Germans, but as the men stood their ground splendidly, it produced little effect. “Shorts” from the British artillery caused trouble and it was from one of these that Captain H. L. Watts was killed.

BEATING OFF A GERMAN ATTACK.

About a quarter of an hour before the normal time for stand-to (4.30 p.m.), Captain G. Green, of “C” Company, was observing with a periscope near the barricade end of the new trench when he saw a German officer pointing out to some men various parts of the trench held by 9th Essex. He immediately caused “C” Company to stand to and the bombers and machine gunners had just got ready for action when three squads, each of six men, advanced from the edge of the Quarry. They were immediately fired upon. One man actually reached a point in the Battalion’s portion of the trench, but fell dead within it. One or two others crept within throwing distance, but they were all killed by the vigilant Essex. The men were still on the firestep in readiness for any further movement when heavy rifle fire was opened from the edge of the Quarry, which was evidently thickly manned. The divisional artillery, with that of the Guards Division, was turned upon this hostile movement and the advance finally died away from the accurate rifle and machine gunfire of the Essex, after which hostile activity was limited to bombing at the barricade, in which, after a long struggle, the Battalion bombers finally gained superiority. The bombing section were entitled to great credit, for they worked themselves to exhaustion and that without the guidance of an officer, for Lieut. Hickox was left in command of “D” Company owing to Captain Watts’ death until Lieut. Bright, of the 7th Suffolks, came up an hour or so later. The machine gun section also deserved credit for their readiness and coolness under pressure. Lieut. C. H. Bearblock worked unceasingly until wounded, whilst Lance-Corporal Butcher showed pluck and resource in moving his forward gun to a better position in the rear of the trench, from which he could sweep the front of the barricade. During the

night the enemy several times crept within bombing distance of our line, but were repulsed. On October 20th there was again heavy enemy shelling, in the course of which the commanding officer had a narrow escape, two men near him being killed by a shellburst. The enemy made another desperate effort to force the barricade at night, where the bombers of the Sussex and Royal Fusiliers had relieved the Essex. Some damage was done and the situation was critical for a time, but the arrival of more bombers from the Middlesex and Essex soon turned the scale. The Battalion much appreciated the aid which officers of other units voluntarily rendered, especially Captain Brown and Lieut. Leach, bombing officer, of the Middlesex Regiment, and Captain Woodhams (Sussex).

The struggle was graphically described by Lance-Corporal Sidney G. Pudney, of "C" Company, a resident of Halstead, who said: "On Tuesday morning my Company ("C") was first in the firing line and about 4 o'clock (p.m.) we had the orders to 'stand to'—that's to our rifles. About five several shell came over, including some big 'Jack Johnsons,' and all of a sudden a mist came across our front, so we could hardly discern anything. In the meantime the Germans crept quite close to us and 'bang-bang' went all along our line. When I fought my way through smoke and dust I discovered my boys lying all round me killed and wounded. All my section was laid low and I was left alone. I heard my captain shouting his orders, 'Mount the parapet and give them rapid fire!' I jumped up all on my own and poured shots into them till I could not hold my rifle, as it was so hot, so I had to use the fallen ones'. The next thing I did was to light a cigarette to form my nerves, which did me a lot of good. Our captain—I shall never forget him—he was one of the best and bravest men I ever saw. He stood up alone, open to all shots, cheering us on all the while. Then he broke into that splendid chorus of the song, 'Keep the home fires burning.' We all joined in, firing at the same time. We held the trench, although we lost a lot, but we shot them down all ways—a proper slaughter and no mistake. They tried again, but our brave little boys drove them back. . . . We are brought back for a rest now. . . . I had a wash and shave to-day, the first for ten days. We did look a lot of corks, but we came back cheery, considering what we had been through. . . . Are we downhearted? No!"

The much-tried Essex were relieved on October 21st and went by motor 'bus to billets in a tobacco factory at Bethune, where, the next day, the divisional commander inspected the Battalion and heartily congratulated them upon their work—"A counter-attack by the enemy was successfully repulsed and on enquiring which regiment was responsible, I was told it was the Essex, and notably your bomb-throwers, assisted by those of other regiments. That is your great opportunity—the counter-

attack—for it is then that you cause the greatest losses to the enemy. I thank you for your good work and hope that you will continue to maintain the tradition of your line battalions, which has always been a high one." Appreciation was also expressed by the corps commander and the officer commanding the 1st Grenadier Guards, among others. The latter sent word, "Well done, comrades. Stick to it. Sincere thanks for help and co-operation yesterday and to-day." They were engaged in fierce bombing fights themselves throughout this period and knew what it was like. The casualties were heavy, however, during the Battalion's tour in the front line. In addition to the deaths of Major A. T. W. Constable and Captain H. L. Watts, Lieut. C. H. Bearblock was so severely wounded that he subsequently died and four other officers were also wounded. The loss among other ranks totalled 209. Among the fallen were six friends from Rayne, near Braintree. They enlisted together. A high explosive shell fell on the assembly trenches immediately on the Battalion's arrival on October 13th, and the six comrades, who were together in the fire bay, were killed.

"Many stories of that period come to mind," wrote an officer. "I remember that in the lime kiln in the Loos chalkpit there stood a windlass. It was night; the second-in-command was lying down in a corner almost under the shaft, whilst the C.O. was dictating orders on a bench. At intervals all day 'whizz-bangs' came over in coveys. Then one hit the windlass. Down the shaft came a lot of earth with some of the woodwork, but, fortunately for the second-in-command, who was not sure that he had survived, not the windlass itself, which was later seen to be hanging almost by a thread. The rush of air upset the C.O., his clerk and their bench and doused the light, so that all was darkness. A match, however, soon disclosed that all were safe and unharmed. Then, again, in the trenches near Loos, some men left their rations on the firestep and in the morning the latter were missing. This happened more than once. Later they were relieved by cavalry, who came in to clear up the battlefield—it wanted some clearing, too. Then it was that two Huns were discovered in a dug-out and the mystery was solved! It was hard to realize how very slowly the head of a long file of men must move, risking loss of many of those following, but I quickly knew it when the 9th Essex went into trenches at the rear of Loos. During the afternoon the second-in-command and the company commanders had reconnoitred the country, leaving the main road at the spot where a battalion transport had been caught and destroyed by shell-fire a few days before. All were back on the road except Major Constable. As they could not leave him, they went over the ground again and found him. He and others had noticed a rather prominent carcase of a horse, which made a landmark in an otherwise rather featureless country strewn with dead. They rode back and met the Battalion in Brigade in

column of route. What a march it was! Almost every five minutes there was a halt. At last the point in the road was reached where the second-in-command found two Guardsmen who were to act as guides to two companies and Battalion headquarters, which in those days included the armourer sergeant, who was sent to the front. As the guides talked about making for some tree in the black darkness, the second-in-command thought he could trust himself to find the way and off they went, first through the remnants of barbed wire of our old front line. 'Go slow in front,' kept coming up and slowly did they go, it seemed, yet when three-quarters of the way had been covered, bringing them in front of some of our field batteries, there was time to take stock and the second-in-command found he had some fifty of his original hundreds. Well, he thought, he had better fold them, which he did by midnight, and then started back to find the 'gee-gee' in the wilderness. This was located and the remainder were guided safely to the trench between 1 a.m. and 2 a.m. The trouble had been caused by an officer mistaking another horse's carcass about a mile from the originally selected landmark! Yet again, with two companies behind him, the second-in-command lost one in advancing in reserve on October 18th to Breslau Trench. The only line of advance was a single trench used for returning wounded as well, so one can imagine its congested state. He found the missing company by night time, or, perhaps, the company found him. Then about 10 p.m. the C.O. and Adjutant came along to order him to move forward and occupy the Hairpin. Well, he waited to gather in some machine gunners and then started slowly, so slowly, but all in vain. One platoon at least was missing from a company when by 1 a.m. he reached his destination, then to overhear the remark, 'He has lost some more men.'"

THE WINTER OF 1915-16.

The winter of 1915-16 represented for the Battalion heroic endurance of weather conditions, which were about as wet and gloomy as could well be, but which could not break the cheery confidence of the men. They were highly tried in that most exhausting of all forms of warfare, bombing and mining. The early weeks of 1916 were spent in incessant fighting, waged in the neighbourhood of the Hohenzollern Redoubt at Loos in what became known as the Battle of the Craters. The enemy spirit had not yet been broken and they met mine by counter-mine and bombing raid by bombing raid until each side fought themselves to a standstill.

An important change of command of the 35th Brigade occurred during November. Brig.-General van Straubenzee was invalided and he was succeeded by Brig.-General A. Solly Flood, 4th Dragoon Guards, who had earned a reputation as a stout fighter in the epic days of First Ypres. His tireless effort

was to impress all men with the pugnacity of his own disposition. He would, on the eve of attack, send messages to the various units in which the invariable refrain was "Give them Hell!" When on the Somme on August 12th, 1916, he sent a short typewritten note to "Mallard" and "Diver"—the code names for the 7th Norfolks and the 9th Essex—and this is what it contained: "Now is your time to get a bit back. Give them Hell!" Again, in October of the same year, when attacking once more in the same area, he reminded the 9th Essex that they had the 2nd Battalion on one side of them and the 11th Battalion on the other. So the gallant brigadier wrote, under date October 18th, 1916, "To-morrow should be a Regimental Day. Men of your County are side by side with you. Remember what the Battalion did on the 19th October last year. Give them Hell this time again." The reference to October 19th was to the repulse of the enemy counter-attack upon the Quarries. When he left the Brigade nearly a month later (November 8th, 1916) to become temporary Commandant of the Third Army School, it was to the sincere regret of all ranks, but in his hour of departure he could not forget his slogan. After expressing deepest gratitude to all ranks for their loyalty and energetic support, he went on to urge "All ranks must maintain that loyal energy to the end, whether it be working in the trenches or fighting in battle. In such manner only can the good name of the Brigade he carried on, old scores be wiped off and the ultimate defeat of the enemy assured." Then he wrote, "My final injunction to all ranks is once more, 'Give them Hell!'" The Brigadier had also that touch of human understanding which marks the natural leader of men. He had scarce been in command of the Brigade a month when he issued a special order in which he conveyed the compliments of the Corps Commander, stating, on his behalf, that the latter had met two companies of the 9th Essex on their march from the trenches to Le Quesnoy. He wished it to be known that the regular manner in which they were marching and their cheerful appearance not only did them much credit, but gave him great pleasure.

The 12th Division took over from the Guards Division and thus faced Hohenzollern Redoubt. Conditions were very difficult, not only on account of the heavy rains, which flooded trenches and dug-outs, but also because the Germans had excellent observation in daylight from Fosse 8. It was at night time that the men had freedom of movement. The wet weather caused "trench feet" to appear, which brought remedial agencies for the men in the form of dry socks and clothing, soup kitchens and hot baths, whilst the timely coffee stall was ever a feature of the support area. By the end of November the 12th Division had made conditions much more tolerable, but then it was that it went into reserve near Lillers, with the 35th Brigade at Bosenghem, the 36th at St. Hilaire and the 37th at Ecquedecques. The

“rest” period was a time of incessant work, quite different from the popular conception of anxious ones in the Home Country. There was relief in the form of sports, particularly football, and entertainment by concert parties. The 83rd Division was succeeded on December 10th in the Givenchy Zone, with headquarters at Bethune. Hardened veterans of the mud of the Loos Sector found conditions even worse there, particularly round about Festubert. It was low-lying country, defended by breastworks. At places the area was so flooded that the defences stood out as isolated islands, from which the damp and shivering defenders had to be relieved by others, equally moist and cold, every twenty-four hours. Then it was that the soup kitchen was introduced and the men had another distraction provided in the form of the cinema. There was mining and bombing activity in the Givenchy sector, which did not prominently concern the 35th Brigade, and then on the 18th-19th January the Division went into reserve near Busnes, destined, although at that time it knew it not, within the next three months for some of the hardest and most exhausting fighting of the war.

“Mud and trench mortars were our worst enemies,” wrote an Essex officer. “A great deal has been written in books on the war about mud, but no one can realize what it was like who was not in it. Parties of men would take at least an hour to go half a mile along the best communication trenches and a company officer would often not more than get once round his line in a night visiting all forward posts and questioning sentries. High gum boots were literally sucked off the feet when the mud was in a certain state of stickiness, and at times it would be deep enough to come over even the tops of these boots. There were many days when men would rather have gone over the top and had a good fight than remain under these conditions.” With this in mind as an illustration of the hardships which the 9th Essex endured, let their story be told in some detail for the next three months.

When the 12th Division took over from the Guards Division on October 26th, 1915, the 35th Brigade held the section formerly occupied by the 1st Guards Brigade from the redoubt at the top of Spurn Head to a point in Savile Row, the 9th Essex having two companies in reserve in Lancashire trenches and the other two companies in close support to the front line battalions in the old British support trenches. The Battalion moved therefrom on October 28th in relief of the 7th Suffolks and occupied a section from the Spurn Head redoubt to the junction of Big Willie with Crown Trench—two companies in the firing line, two platoons in support and the remainder in Battalion reserve in the old British front line between Hulluch Alley and Border Lane. Responsibility was extended on October 29th, when the portion of Big Willie was taken over as far as its junction with Jermyn Street and garrisoned by two platoons from reserve. The 9th

Essex were in and out with the 7th Suffolks until they went into billets on November 7th at Annequin. During the last days of October the weather was very bad and, in consequence of the heavy rain, the trenches, which had little revetment, collapsed in numerous places. The only material available for rebuilding was sandbags and repair was, therefore, difficult. The communication trenches became streams of mud. The weather improved later, but several days elapsed before the mud and water were cleared away. The enemy were at this time quiet, though there was occasional heavy shelling, with mortar missiles as daily visitors. In the month of November the 9th Essex were successively in billets in Bethune, La Bourse and in the cellars at Vermelles. From sickness and casualties, the Battalion had become much reduced in numbers and "C" and "D" Companies were, therefore, temporarily merged into one company under the command of Captain G. Green. The weather at this time was very cold, with clear moonlit frosty nights, but without snow or rain, and, moreover, enemy activity had sensibly subsided. At the end of November the Battalion entrained for rest billets at Thiennes and there carried out a change of training, varied by cross country running and football. In the middle of December the 9th Essex were in the line again in the familiar terrain and had two companies of the 16th K.R.R.C. attached for instruction. The Battalion had again resumed the four company organization, but was still so weak, being 600 of all ranks, that the reserve bombers, usually kept at headquarters, were sent up to assist the three companies in the front line. The line on the flanks was very close to the enemy. A mass of craters lay between and bombing saps were constructed so as to command them. In the centre the ground was more open and, therefore, presented less of a problem in defence. When in reserve billets at Quesnoy the Battalion stood to on December 21st and 22nd because of gas operations undertaken by the 2nd Division, south of the La Bassée Canal, but no offensive ensued, although the heavy enemy shelling did some damage in the support lines. Just before Christmas the 9th went into the front trenches at Givenchy, where there was considerable rifle grenade shooting. The trenches were very wet, but a brief spell of fine weather enabled some progress to be made in draining them. Meals were prepared in cookers situated in the village, close to Battalion headquarters, and were taken into the front trenches by means of light railways. Wooden carriers were made with padded boxes to put the dixies in so as to keep the food hot. The Battalion was short of these implements, but very satisfactory results were obtained from those which were in use. The first Christmas Day abroad was observed partially as a holiday in Essars. In the morning the companies were employed in repairing the numerous "keeps" and redoubts roundabout, forming part of the defences of Bethune, but were allowed to rest after 12 noon "to remind them," says the War

Diary, "that a Christmas dinner was possible even here." On December 27th the Battalion marched to Festubert and had two companies in the old British line. The other two companies ("A" and "B") had two platoons in the front line, with the remainder in billets at l'Epinette and relieved every twenty-four hours. The arrangement proved very beneficial, as it provided the men with the opportunity of drying their clothing. This part of the British front consisted of a series of islands, standing out of a sea of water and mud, and communication between them was only possible after dark. The weather conditions prevented much improvement being undertaken, but drainage was constantly being done. The Battalion was reinforced by nine officers and 119 other ranks during December, a welcome addition, for it had become weak in strength. New Year Day, 1916, found the 9th Essex distributed as follows: "D" Company, in billets, Estaminet Corner; "C" Company, one and a half platoons in billets, two platoons in Central Keep and half platoon in East Keep, Festubert; "B" Company, two platoons in billets, two platoons in North and South Cailloux keeps; "A" Company, two platoons in billets, two platoons in Epinette, West End Keep; battalion headquarters, close to "A" Company billets in Epinette.

Maintenance work kept the Battalion fully employed, but a change came on January 4th, when the 35th Brigade went into divisional reserve. The Battalion marched into billets at Hingette, where, to their relief, the men found they had no "keeps" to maintain. Musketry and drill rapidly increased efficiency of the unit, the strength of which was aided by a draft of 100 men. 2nd Lieut. Wreford Brown's Company ("D") won first place in the Brigade competition for manipulation of the rifle bolt and rapid loading. On January 9th the 9th Essex went to Yorre on motor lorries and from there marched to front line trenches east of Givenchy. The relief was complete by 2.30 p.m., having been considerably interrupted by hostile shelling of the Westminster Bridge-Windy Corner road. In spite of this, the relief was carried out across country with only one casualty. The line held was exactly the same as that which the Battalion occupied when at Givenchy in December. Three companies were in the front trenches, with the fourth in reserve. The trenches were in much better condition, however, the right sector containing the only portion where the water was troublesome. The men were busily employed upon the construction of rifle grenade stands and preliminary registration upon points of the enemy's line was carried out. Both sides were engaged in active shelling and one enemy missile struck headquarters and wrecked the commanding officer's bedroom. The 9th Essex marched into billets at Le Quesnoy on January 11th and when they went back again to the trenches they completed their work upon rifle grenade stands, constructed

bombing saps and set up trench mortar batteries and West bomb-throwers. About 1,200 rifle grenades and several hundreds of trench mortar bombs, including about forty sixty-pounders, were fired and breached the parapet in several places, upon the repair of which the enemy worked hard throughout the night of January 14th-15th, hindered by machine gun fire. The Battalion went back to the tobacco factory in Bethune on January 16th and the next day entrained for Lillers and marched thence to St. Hilaire. The billets there were far superior to those at Thienne, for they had been put in very good order by the 2nd Division. On January 20th the 9th Essex were drawn up in companies at fifty yards intervals along the side of the Aire Road in St. Hilaire village in honour of Marshal Joffre, who passed through on his way to Ferfay. Manceuvres were held on January 30th, when the Battalion was part of the vanguard of the 35th Brigade, which was advanced guard to the 12th Division marching from Lillers on Therouanne, the site of the battle of The Spurs. The artillery of the 33rd Division was attached to the Division for this purpose, the divisional artillery being still in the line. The casualties for the month included 2nd Lieut. R. G. H. Copeman, who died of wounds received at Givenchy on January 11th. In addition, four other ranks were killed and one officer and 24 other ranks wounded. The weather throughout January was very mild and little rain fell.

In the early part of February training was actively continued. The syllabus included : (a) Advanced training of five bombing squads (one N.C.O. and eight men) of each company and reserves for same ; (b) Companies in attack from trenches, including the assault and consolidation of the position gained ; (c) Musketry, which concluded with a brigade rifle meeting ; (d) Snipers and scouts, four men per platoon, particular attention being paid to the sniperscope and the telescopic rifle ; (e) Anti-gas precautions. The quick manipulation of the smoke helmet and the other precautions against an enemy attack ; (f) Route marching. Recreation included a series of football matches, in which " D " Company won the inter-company tournament and " A " Company secured first place in the cross country run. The officers enjoyed two Brigade steeplechases over the only piece of country not ploughed up, but the fences were very poor. It was intended to hold a divisional horse show, but the idea had to be abandoned owing to an earlier order for the trenches than had been expected. Refreshed by the rest and invigorated by the clear wintry weather, the Battalion marched to billets in Gonnehem, with the other battalions of the Brigade in the vicinity. Thence, on February 13th, the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Dismounted Division, were relieved in divisional reserve, with Brigade headquarters in the Chateau, La Bourse ; 7th Norfolks, La Bourse ; 7th Suffolks and 9th Essex, Sailly La Bourse, and 5th Royal Berkshires, Bethune. By platoons at 200 yards intervals the Battalion marched to

Vermelles on February 14th and with the rest of the Brigade took over the line from Devon Lane to just north of St. Elie Avenue, known as "C" Section, Front System, from 2nd Dismounted Brigade of the 2nd Dismounted Division. The 12th Division was by this move definitely committed to the Battle of the Craters.

Stories of the period in the Festubert area included one concerning a well-known major. In that district there were breastworks in lieu of trenches which were reached by means of boards placed over running water. This peppery officer was returning to Battalion headquarters flashing his torch now and then just to be sure of not leaving the duckboards at various corners, when, in stentorian tones, came the interrogation, "What the — are you showing a light for?" The reply came, "To see my way," which provoked even greater anger and a threat to put the offender under arrest. Then the answer came, "Major — will be pleased to obey Captain —'s orders if he places him under arrest." Result: Retreat of the bellicose captain, whose C.O. apologized next day for his abruptness, an apology quite unexpected, by the way, because the major did not breathe a word of the incident outside his own mess. Men in the ranks seldom realized the difficulty of always being on the right road. There in a brand new country, certainly well provided with maps to scale, it was often in the dark that moves were made, hence the amusing lines in *Punch* on "Marching who knows where." Coming out of the Festubert front, the Second-in-Command was without an adjutant. He had collected various detached companies and things seemed to be going well, but coming to branching roads after passing some canal, as there was a house with lights in it nearby, he thought he would make sure. Map reading by the aid of a flashlight when places have to be located is a poor game. So he halted and was proceeding to enter the house when a voice in the ranks said satirically, "Lost the way, as usual." The officer spoke to the unseen man a few "winged words," examined his map and came out of the house only to find that the billeting parties had just arrived. On another occasion in the Festubert lines attention was turned to reducing the volume of water in the ditches, in the course of which a culvert lying a little in the rear of the parapet was unblocked. The result was wonderfully successful, when up came the man in charge, who commented on the work adversely and said the water would come back again. This was countered by the assertion that water which ran away downhill would never come back uphill. But whether it would or no, the water had gone, which was a distinct relief.

BATTLE OF THE CRATERS.

The Battle of the Craters, which was waged with varying fortune in the Hohenzollern sector, during February and March, 1916—among others of the period described by the new

Commander-in-Chief (Sir Douglas Haig) as a "minor operation"—took heavy toll of the personnel of the 12th Division. The bulk of the fighting by the Division was undertaken by the 36th and 37th Brigades, the 35th Brigade only coming into the line when the struggle was dying down. Much of the activity along the British front at this time was designed to aid the French, who, on the right at Verdun, were struggling desperately to withstand an almost overwhelming German onslaught. There were two phases. The first, which occupied the greater part of February, was devoted to mining and counter-mining, the design being to blow in the German line and mining system by four huge mines. This work called forth the highest qualities of endurance and courage, particularly by the Tunnelling Companies. The grim and grimy undertaking had an occasional lighter side, however. One story, related in the "History of the 12th Division," states that canaries were used in the galleries for the purpose of detecting gas. Twice a particular bird gave warning by dropping off his perch. "Having recovered on both these occasions, he evidently considered he had done his 'bit,' as on the next and future visits he habitually fell off his perch immediately he entered the galleries, although there was no suspicion of gas. Consequently, he had to be relieved of further duty and took his place as the Commanding Officer's pet." The second phase, which opened with the entry of March, consisted of blowing in the mines and endeavouring to seize and hold the hostile positions. Fortune varied, but at the end of a series of obstinate struggles, little progress had been made and the position was very much as it was before operations commenced.

When the 12th Division entered the line again it was responsible for the system extending from the Quarries to a point north of Hohenzollern Redoubt, about 8,500 yards, and practically identical with that which had been guarded in the previous November. Both sides were busily employed in mining. The explosion of German mines had created four large craters in No Man's Land, known as Nos. 1 to 4, the lips of which were held by the enemy. The Division, however, placed great faith in the four great mines which had been prepared and by which it was hoped to effect the capture of the enemy first line and the Chord. If this effort succeeded it would be possible, by holding the mine craters which would be formed in front of the existing craters, to command the enemy's trenches and thus obtain the advantage of observation, which was in German control from Fosse 8. To the 36th Brigade was allotted the task of following up the explosion of the mines and to occupy the craters thus formed. The mines were fired at 5.45 p.m. on March 2nd and the results were almost exactly according to forecast. There was very gallant fighting by the Brigade, which made good its position in the new craters. When the 37th Brigade relieved the 36th they made a plucky onslaught, on March 6th, upon Triangle Crater which they seized, but could not permanently

retain. The conditions were most unpleasant, parties bombing each other in the mud and slush unaware of what was happening on their flanks. For his conduct in this fight, Corporal Cotter, of the 6th Buffs, was awarded the V.C. The German counter-attack opened on March 18th with a tremendous bombardment which did damage in the back areas and destroyed the divisional canteen in Vermelles. Their effort was partially successful. The next day, March 19th, the 35th Brigade relieved the 37th. Mining operations continued with vigour, but there was no full dress attack and the troops were much more interested in the rumour of a move which would take them from this dismal territory. When the Division left the line on the night of April 26th-27th they were just in time to escape another heavy German attack, which penetrated some distance. The line was restored by a well-timed counter-attack. For some hours, however, it seemed likely that the 12th Division, which had to use PH helmets as far back as Bethune, would be recalled, but fortunately their services were not required.

The 35th Brigade, on February 14th, had a battalion in the front line system, a second in support, in the old British line north and south of the Fosseway, a third in cellars in Vermelles and the fourth in huts in Noyelles, the last-named two being in reserve. Brigade transport was parked at Noyelles, that of the Battalions being at the Chateau. The units relieved each other in the different positions every three days. The 9th Essex, in front, held trenches from Devon Lane to St. Elie Avenue, the chief defensive points being Lookout Crescent and Brook Wood Street. Two companies were in the front, one in support and one in reserve; Battalion headquarters were just south of the Fosseway. The enemy had sprung several mines during the previous month or so and these, with the counter mining, conducted from the British positions, had considerably altered the appearance of the landscape since the Battalion was there in October, 1915. The detection of hostile mining was constantly in mind. Holding the line when tunnelling was being frequently reported presented great difficulties and was a severe strain. All the communication trenches were guarded with bombing stops and loopholes. Saps ran out to all the craters in No Man's Land and were held as bombing posts, permanently manned by thirteen bombing squads—five each from the front line companies and three from the support company. In addition, a squad was stationed on each flank of the support company, and the five squads of the reserve company remained with that unit, to be used as required. The hold on the front system was strengthened by twelve Lewis guns and four Vickers machine guns. Six patrols of "A" and "B" Companies conducted consecutive reconnaissances of the enemy's wire on February 15th. A false alarm was the chief incident of February 16th, for it was reported the Germans

were going to spring a mine under Lookout Crescent. The Battalion went back to reserve billets in Noyelles on February 17th, having suffered a loss of five killed and nine wounded. The next few days were spent in cleaning up and resting, with the weather wet and stormy. The 9th Essex were in support in the old British line near Vermelles on February 20th. Wiring, mine fatigues, ration carrying and the upkeep and improvement of the old British line kept the Battalion busy in weather that had turned cold, with snow and hard frost at night. It was bitter weather when the Essex went back in reserve and remained so when the Battalion returned to the front line on February 26th. The frontage of the Brigade had been extended to the left as far as Rifleman's Trench, previously known as the Kink, and consequently two battalions held it, the responsibility of the 9th Essex running from Devon Lane to Goeben Alley. A rapid thaw caused trenches to fall in and working parties were employed night and day to keep the passage clear and prevent the trench boards from being lost to view. The 9th Essex were in reserve billets in Noyelles on March 1st and were in support of the 36th Brigade for the attack on March 2nd, but their services were not required. The next day the Battalion went into the portion of the front line which it had held during February, and that same evening the enemy exploded three small mines—two in the Hairpin to the left, held by the 7th Suffolks, and the other in the Lookout craters on the right of the Battalion's front. No damage or casualties resulted to the 9th Essex. The last-mentioned explosion created a shallow crater almost midway in No Man's Land and to the left of a sap which had been dug out to a crater formed on February 13th, when the Battalion took over from the Cavalry. This sap was lengthened twelve yards to the lip of the new crater and a bombing post established. The weather was cold and very wet, varied by heavy falls of snow, which caused the trenches to fall in, continual labour being required to keep them clear. On March 6th the 9th Essex were back in cellars and the men had a trying time with working parties in very bad weather. The unit was in the front line on March 9th. That night a mine was exploded in the legs of the Hairpin to the left of the Battalion's position, but the task of sapping and constructing new posts was not hindered by the enemy. The rainy weather caused incessant labour in the trenches, varied by rifle grenade fire upon the Germans, which brought no reply. The Brigade was relieved by the 36th Brigade on March 11th and the 9th Essex went back to Noyelles, where gumboots could be discarded for the time being. Thence the Battalion went in motor 'buses into billets in the tobacco factory at Bethune, for the Brigade had become divisional reserve. Battalion headquarters were in Rue Frederick des Georges. An unfortunate accident marked the training whilst in this area. A class was undergoing instruction in firing the Peppin

rifle grenade when one of the missiles burst in the muzzle of the rifle and caused many casualties. Four were killed and 2nd Lieut. R. N. Treadwell and eighteen others were wounded. The boxing tournament commenced on March 15th, in a ring specially erected in the tobacco factory, and continued on the 16th, when the winners became entitled to represent the Battalion in the Brigade tournament on March 18th. The quality of the contests was, however, not up to the standard of Shorncliffe days, casualties having played havoc among the expert ringmen. The Battalion won the Brigade bombing competition on March 18th and was second in three other events, but the eagerly anticipated Brigade boxing tournament at 5 p.m. in the Municipal Theatre, Bethune, came to an untimely end. The building was packed, but just when excitement was most keen news came of the projected attack of the 37th Brigade upon the Hohenzollern sector, and the Brigade was to stand-to at 7 p.m. The tournament was at once abandoned. The battalions were hurried away to their stations, but only 7th Norfolks actually took post in the trenches. The next day (March 19th) the Brigade relieved the 37th Brigade and the 9th Essex had two companies in Alexandra trench and its vicinity, with another in support and the fourth in reserve, Battalion headquarters being near Bart's Alley. The Battalion took turn about with the 7th Norfolks in front line duty. The front, rugged with craters, was held by three companies, who had to supply bombing squads for eighteen saps, and thus only three bombing squads could be retained in reserve in Vigo Street. The enemy had been unusually quiet, but about 6 p.m. on March 23rd he opened a heavy fire with trench mortars, aerial torpedoes, high explosive and shrapnel. Fortunately, there were few casualties, but much damage was done to the trenches. Bigger Willie, the Kink, top of Gordon Alley, Sackville Street, Massa Alley and part of Alexandra trench suffered severely and in some cases were almost levelled flat. The most deadly missile was the aerial torpedo. The restoration of the line was in itself a formidable task, but it was made much more difficult by the heavy rains. Sniping was the chief feature of the day's record on March 24th, when the Battalion snipers claimed nine hits and another three the following day. Baths and clean clothing made the turn of duty at Vermelles doubly pleasant. Several patrols reconnoitred the enemy's wire on March 30th and returned safely, despite the activity of hostile snipers. For bringing in a wounded man under fire on this occasion Lance-Corporal G. Read received the Military Medal. During the month the Battalion lost 16 killed and 54 wounded.

There had been only one small reinforcing draft in March, so that the arrival of a party of 43 on April 2nd did little to fill the Battalion's depleted ranks. When the Brigade went out of the line on April 3rd the Battalion was allotted fresh billets at Annequin, where the duties of the rest period were interrupted

by enemy shelling, which was apparently directed at the church. Bombing attack, bomb-throwing and rifle grenade competitions were conducted and the interrupted Brigade boxing tournament was completed, with the Battalion entering three finalists for the divisional tournament. The Battalion went into the line again on April 10th in the Quarry sector, with the whole of the companies in the front trenches, which ran from Stone Street to Breslau Avenue. Behind the 9th Essex was a battalion in support in the old British line and another in reserve, with two companies in Vermelles and two in Noyelles. The face of No Man's Land had again considerably changed since the Battalion were last in that area, several additional craters and saps having to be guarded, with the disadvantage, too, that the enemy had the better observation. 2nd Lieut. Marshall successfully reconnoitred a group of craters opposite the Quarries, as a result of which effective fire was directed against the enemy's posts with trench mortars. The plucky officer was subsequently decorated with the Military Cross. The 9th Essex were again in and out of the line in turn with the 7th Norfolks. On April 16th a trench mortar so annoyed the enemy posted at the crater lips that he retaliated with heavy artillery and a shell fell near Battalion headquarters, but, fortunately, failed to explode. Moonlight nights hindered reconnaissance by patrols, but the search for information was persisted in, for a raid was in contemplation. The enemy sent bombing parties against "A" Company working on saps on April 18th, but they were quickly dispersed by Corporal Digby and his party. The sentries of "B" Company reported that the enemy were massing in their front, conspicuous in their well-known spiked helmets—but their numbers proved to be fewer than was at first estimated. An endeavour was made to get the artillery to play upon them, but the energetic efforts of an officer to establish communication brought more amusement than shells, for he was holding the 'phone upside down and the ear-piece was most unresponsive! The Brigade occupied the sector for the last time on April 22nd, when it was relieved by the 36th Brigade and went into reserve at Bethune. Commenting upon this tour of service, Lieut.-Colonel Lewes subsequently wrote: "The Brigade got through an immense amount of work while in the line and it was acknowledged that the trenches were handed over in a much more satisfactory state than when taken over. This entailed a very large number of working parties over and above those detailed for Battalion work. They were especially numerous when in support and sometimes they averaged 150 a day, even when the Battalion was engaged upon front line duty and when all the available men were really required under the commanding officer's sole control. Also when in reserve, it appears advisable to give the men as much rest as possible after nine days in the line. The numerous mine shafts from which innumerable sandbags blocked

many trenches were an everlasting source of trouble. Deep dug-outs also added to these pests, and the only way of keeping the number down was to empty the bags and push them over either the parapet or the parados. Trench mortar and rifle grenade fighting occurred every day and a vast improvement in our trench mortar firing was noticeable." Upon arrival at Bethune the fur coats were stored in readiness for next winter and the weather being on its best behaviour, the Easter Sunday of 1916 was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Upon relief by the 46th Brigade of the 15th Division the Battalion railed to Lillers and thence by route march to the I Corps reserve area—Raimbert, Floringhen and Cauchy-a-la-Tour—where the 9th Essex were billeted at Raimbert. The quarters were poor, and as almost every inch of ground in the neighbourhood was cultivated, training was seriously hampered. The Battalion's transport was inspected without warning by the Brigadier on the line of march and that of the 9th Essex was adjudged the best turned out, a prize being awarded.

ON THE SOMME.

The Battles of the Somme, 1916 were undertaken with the object of bringing the enemy to action and forcing him from a series of strong positions, upon the fortification of which he had been busily employed for nearly two years. The decision to attack in the middle of 1916 was also influenced by the German pressure upon Verdun, where critical fighting had been proceeding for some time. The main front of the attack on July 1st extended from Maricourt, round the salient of Fricourt, to the Ancre in front of St. Pierre Divion. The German trenches north of the Ancre as far as Serre inclusive were assaulted simultaneously (General Sir H. S. Rawlinson, Fourth Army) and a subsidiary attack was undertaken on both sides of the salient at Gommecourt (General Sir E. H. Allenby, Third Army). On the right considerable success was achieved, Montauban and Mametz being entered. In the centre and left some progress was made, but not to the extent that had been hoped, and it early became evident that the enemy's defensive system could only be secured at the cost of continuous and strenuous fighting. The army, however, was in splendid spirit and in five days, according to the official despatches, "on a front of over six miles from the Briqueterie to La Boisselle our troops had swept over the whole of the enemy's first and strongest system of defence, which he had done his utmost to render impregnable. They had driven him back over a distance of more than a mile and had carried four elaborately fortified villages." Fresh corps were hurried into the contest and Contalmaison, Mametz Wood, Ovillers and Trones Wood became battle points with a permanent place in British military history. On July 14th another extended operation was directed from Longueval to Bazentin-le-Petit Wood, which resulted by July 17th in the capture of the enemy's second line system on a front of over three miles and securing a footing upon the main ridge. The enemy reacted against Delville Wood, which was not finally recaptured until July 27th. Meanwhile, the Fourth Army endeavoured to advance on a wide front from Guillemont to near Pozieres (July 23rd) and made some progress, but found the enemy better prepared for resistance. Pozieres was seized on July 25th and later Longueval also passed completely into our possession. During August the outskirts of Guillemont village were occupied and the British hold upon the ridge was extended and consolidated. The offensive opened again on September 3rd and continued for some days. Guillemont was stormed, Cruchy was seized, progress was made north of Delville Wood and High Wood and in Leuze Wood. By September

9th, "practically the whole of the forward crest of the main ridge on a front of some 9,000 yards from Delville Wood to the wood at Mouquet Farm was in our hands. East of Delville Wood for a further 3,000 yards to Leuze Wood we were firmly established on the main ridge, whilst further east, across the Combles Valley, the French were advancing victoriously on our right. But though the centre of our line was well placed, on our flanks there was still difficult ground to be won." Then came another great attack on September 15th, which resulted in considerable gains, the troops advancing on a front of over six miles to an average depth of a mile. This success opened the way to the subsequent capture of Morval, Les Boëufs, Gueudecourt and Martinpuich, and led to the entry into Combles. The occupation of Thiepval followed on September 26th, together with the seizure of Schwaben Redoubt and Le Sars. Heavy fighting continued, particularly about Le Transloy, in the mud of an unusually wet October. Then came the final operation in the early days of November, when command was secured of the Valley of the Ancre. The British success was supplemented by equally striking achievements by the French armies on the right and post-war revelations have confirmed the impression prevalent at the end of 1916 that the enemy morale had been very heavily tried and their resources were strained almost to breaking point.

CAPTURE OF OVILLERS.

The impression was that the 12th Division was intended to take part in an attack in the Loos area, but the departure of staff officers and certain units for Albert in the middle of June revealed that their destination was farther south. The Division was conveyed by train to Longeau, near to Amiens, and marched to the Flesselles area, where it became part of the III Corps (Pulteney) of the Fourth Army (Rawlinson). In the opening phase of the attack of July 1st, the 34th and 8th Divisions, III Corps, were to capture La Boisselle and Ovillers, after which the 19th and 12th Divisions were to pass through and push on. The intense artillery bombardment had levelled the villages into dust, but the enemy was snugly ensconced in the elaborate system of underground works. These in turn were protected by innumerable machine gun emplacements. Unfortunately, the attack on July 1st did not meet with the success anticipated. The 34th Division took ground south of La Boisselle, but the 8th Division suffered much loss and subsequently retired to its jumping-off trenches. The 12th Division was, therefore, not called upon to pass through and attack Martinpuich, as intended, three miles behind the German front line, for which operation they had practised upon a section of country which had been specially prepared to represent the objective. The 19th Division was next day employed in

the capture of La Boisselle and the 12th Division was ordered to take Ovillers. The 85th and 86th Brigades were utilized, the former having the 5th Berkshires and 7th Suffolks in front, with the 9th Essex in support and 7th Norfolks in reserve. The leading Battalion got as far as the outskirts of the village and was held up by a counter bombing attack. The 9th Essex, coming forward in support, suffered heavily from artillery and machine gun fire and in the confused fighting which followed the remains of the Brigade were gradually driven out of the German lines. The countermanding of an attack by the Xth Corps, news of which was received too late by the 12th Division, undoubtedly helped the defence, for their machine guns were particularly active on the right flank. An unexpected success attended "C" Company of the 9th Essex (Captain E. H. Kennefick). With a platoon of "B" Company, they lost direction and reached the German line north-west of La Boisselle. They passed right through the lines and village and obtained touch with the 19th Division, who were coming up in the opposite direction. A party of 200 Germans surrendered to the Company. "This loss of direction of 'C' Company, mainly due to the orientation of the departure trench, the darkness and the fact of not having had sufficient time to get acquainted with the surroundings, though leading to success on another front, was a misfortune for its own brigade, which was compelled to give ground owing to lack of support." The attack was also not successful on the right. The casualties were heavy, numbering for the two brigades 97 officers and 2,277 other ranks. "The capture of the position had failed and the failure was undoubtedly affected by the flanking machine gun fire, which was unmolested and raked the ground between the opposing front lines, over which the supports had to cross. Another factor was the execution of the attack in the dark by troops who were hurried into the fight without being well acquainted with the terrain, leading to loss of cohesion ; by the artillery bombardment destroying the wire and trenches, yet failing to reach the deep dug-outs, which remained unharmed ; and by the recent storms making shellholes and trenches in places almost impassable." When the Division was transferred, on July 8th, to the X Corps of the Fifth Army, Sir William Pulteney expressed in an order of the day his appreciation of the gallantry and dash shown by the 12th Division in the attack on Ovillers. The front included La Boisselle and to assist the Division in holding this section, the 74th Brigade of the 34th Division was attached. The Division was not long to maintain a passive role and orders were received for another attack on Ovillers. The 36th Brigade made the effort on the morning of July 7th, with the 74th Brigade moving forward half an hour earlier in an effort to capture machine guns in Mash Valley, which had held up previous attacks by their deadly enfilade fire. The 74th Brigade did not reach their objective and thus when the 36th Brigade, with magnificent

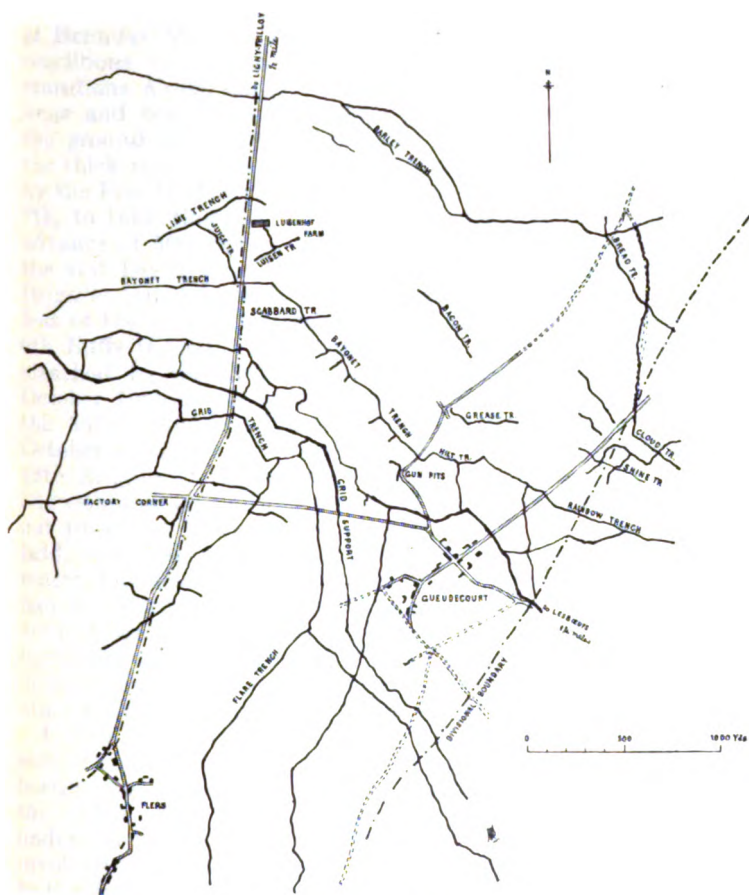
spirit, went over the top, they suffered much from the unsubdued machine guns. Yet they would not be denied. The commanding officer of the 8th Royal Fusiliers (Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Annesley) cheered his men on, waving a walking stick, though successively wounded in hand, leg and thigh, only to fall finally, shot through the heart. But the Battalion had reached the third objective. Other units reached the second objective, into which all the men of the Brigade were withdrawn later in the day, where they held on. The author of the 12th Division history attributes a great deal of the day's success to the fact that the men carried twenty grenades. In the captured trenches was a large quantity of tinned meat, cheese and butter, with mineral waters. When it was dark the East Surreys and 9th Essex were sent forward to reinforce the 36th Brigade, who had maintained their position by bombing attacks and hand-to-hand fighting. The 75th Brigade filled the gap between the 36th and 74th Brigades. Slight progress was made during the night and on July 8th the Essex and East Surreys were able to get through the village of Ovillers and the whole line obtained touch. The 12th Division was withdrawn that night, satisfied with the success achieved in a hard fought encounter. The 85th Brigade was billeted at Varennes. The Division's loss from 1st to 8th July inclusive totalled 189 officers and 4,576 other ranks.

The 12th was again transferred, this time to the VIII Corps, and on July 20th it had relieved the 4th Division (Lambton) on the line near Beaumont Hamel, with headquarters at Betancourt. No fighting occurred and on July 24th-25th the Division was again on the march, this time to Hedaucourt-Bouzincourt, in the II Corps area, from which it had been withdrawn on July 8th. The intention was to push forward in a northerly direction and to secure the high ground north and north-east of Pozieres, so isolating the Germans in Thiepval area. The 49th Division (Perceval) was to pin the Germans to their position, whilst the frontal attack was made by the Australian Corps and the 12th Division. The 36th Brigade gained all their objectives about Fourth Avenue. The success was exploited and progress made along Sixth Avenue. The 36th Brigade, with the Australians, completed the capture of Ration Trench on the night of 4th-5th August, after which the ground was cleared of Germans who had been over-run in the earlier advance. The Commander-in-Chief specially mentioned the 12th Division and 2nd Australian Division for their part in these operations. A German counter-attack, strengthened by flammenwerfer bombers, regained 150 yards of Ration Trench on the night of 5th-6th August, but was driven out again, with the exception of forty yards. The Germans employed a small-sized "egg"-shaped grenade, which gave a longer range than that of the British Mills. The Germans made further counter-attacks on August 8th, when the 35th and 37th Brigades were in the line. Heavy fighting

ensued about points 77 and 89. On August 9th the King, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, inspected the 86th Brigade, in a road just north of Senlis, near to Bouzincourt. Enemy bombardment of Ration Trench on August 11th and 12th troubled the 9th Essex and 7th Norfolks. The Germans were endeavouring to identify troops to be employed in the next attack and were so active that they forced divisional headquarters to evacuate Bouzincourt. On the night of August 12th the 12th Division was to capture Sixth Avenue and the German front line opposite the 87th Brigade whilst the Australians operated against the trenches south of Mouquet Farm and the 49th Division kept the Germans busy on the left by an enterprise against a strong point. "An innovation in artillery and infantry co-operation was attempted in this attack. An 18-pounder battery was placed under the order of each battalion commander for use, if required, at fifteen minutes after zero, a forward observation officer from the battery concerned being in close touch with the battalion commander, a procedure that met with some success." The 35th and 87th Brigades were entrusted with the 12th Division offensive. Sixth Avenue was captured by the 7th Norfolks and 9th Essex. The Germans counter-attacked fiercely, chiefly against the Essex, who refused to move. The 87th Brigade attack had not fulfilled expectations, although most gallantly persisted in. The Division was relieved immediately after the action, headquarters being established at Doullens. The East Anglians were well pleased with their fighting record, for in a fortnight they had taken 1,500 yards of enemy trenches of a depth of from 500 to 1,000 yards. The Commander of the Fifth Army thanked the 12th Division for its good work, in which it had suffered a loss of 126 officers and 2,739 other ranks.

FIGHTING AT GUEUDECOURT.

A move was made to the Arras sector, to the VI Corps of the Third Army. Divisional headquarters were established at Warlus on August 19th, with the 35th Brigade billeted in Arras. The Division was responsible for the defence of the southern suburbs of the city. The trenches running along the valley of the Crinchon were under constant hostile observation. "Portions of Arras were shelled daily and the inhabitants were not allowed out of their houses till 9.30 p.m., at which hour they proceeded to do their shopping. Brétencourt Wailly and Dainville also came in for attention and the railway line was 'watered' by machine guns at night. Arras railway station was at all times considered an unhealthy spot." The enemy raided the line held by the 35th Brigade on August 28th and there were retaliatory raids, one of which, by a party of the 9th Essex, on September 4th, got within eight yards of the German front line when compelled to return by artillery fire. At the end of September



GUEUDECOURT.

the Division left Arras for XV Corps, Fourth Army, with pleasant memories, for the sector was comparatively quiet and it was, therefore, possible to enjoy sports and entertainments. The Division was destined for a "sticky" part of the Somme battle front, the valley in which lay Gueudecourt. Headquarters were at Pommiers Redoubt, whilst 85th Brigade was in reserve at Bernafay Wood. Rats, mud and rain combined to make the conditions deplorable. The labour of bringing up rations and munitions along muddy country roads was most arduous and wear and tear upon men and horses incessant. The state of the ground was so bad that two men were found drowned in the thick mud in shell holes. As part of an extended operation by the Fourth Army, the 12th Division was ordered, on October 7th, to take Bayonet Trench and endeavour to make a further advance of 500 yards. The 20th Division was on the right and the 41st Division on the left. The attack of the 36th and 37th Brigades failed to make any permanent progress, the outstanding feat of the day being the rescue of the wounded Colonel of the 6th Buffs (Cope). The 88th Brigade of the 29th Division was attached to the 12th Division, relieving the 37th Brigade on October 10th at the same time that the 85th Brigade succeeded the 36th. Newfoundlanders and 1st Essex went forward on October 12th and succeeded in taking the first objective, but the 35th Brigade (Suffolks and Norfolks) ran up against uncut wire and although a small party entered the trench, they were bombed out from the flanks. The gunpits, which had been stubbornly held, were taken on the night of October 15th, but when the renewed attack was made on the 19th progress was not as great as had been hoped. The 2nd Hampshires and 1st Essex of the 88th Brigade seized Grease Trench, but uncut wire effectively barred the progress of the 9th Essex. The casualties in the Division during this visit to the battlefield totalled 135 officers and 3,176 other ranks, making a full total of 10,941 for the Somme Battles.

Let us now come to the story of the Battalion. There was some excitement in the 9th Essex sector on April 27th, when a hostile gas attack was launched upon the fronts occupied by the 14th and 16th Divisions. Training was vigorously undertaken. Active service had proved that bombing involved trying and arduous work, which had been left too much to the five bombing squads in each company, a total of 45 trained men, with a few reserves. It was now sought to train each man so that all should be able to take their turn in the work at the saps and bombing posts in the line. The five bombing squads, composed of men trained to the highest state of efficiency, were to be reserved principally for offensive work and the destruction of counter-attacks. In other words, it was considered bombing should be as much the duty of every officer, N.C.O. and man as it was to be a good shot with the rifle. There was considerable activity along the First Army front at the end of the month and

the Battalion was several times warned to be ready to move at two or three hours' notice, but fortunately it was not required. During the month three drafts reported, a total of 156 N.C.O.'s and men.

Training was still being undertaken when May opened. On the 8th the Battalion was billeted at Enquin-les-Mines, where it was placed in G.H.Q. reserve until May 20th, under orders to be ready to move at nine hours' notice either by rail or route march in accordance with a scheme the outline of which had been already communicated. Brigade training replaced Battalion instruction, carried out over country without regard for growing crops, and which taught all ranks many useful lessons in open warfare. The lighter side was not forgotten. The 9th Essex constructed a boxing ring in a barn, in which a successful tournament was conducted. A series of football matches was also played, in which a platoon of "C" Company proved the winners. "B" Company marched to la Buissiere on May 7th to take over for a fortnight the duties of escort to I Corps headquarters in relief of "A" Company, 7th Suffolks. On May 20th the Brigade moved to Rainhert and two days later the Battalion was billeted in Lapugnoy, where again training was undertaken in bombing, wiring, Lewis gun, sniping, bayonet fighting and range practice, whilst instruction in the use of the smoke helmet was also commenced. Major H. C. Copeman left on May 21st to take over command of the 4th Suffolks and was succeeded as second-in-command by Major C. I. Ryan. After orders to be ready to march at an hour's notice, the Brigade, less the 5th Berkshires, marched to the Vandrecourt area on May 28th and the Battalion went into camp at Houchin, from which point the company commanders walked forward to reconnoitre the line of the 1st and 16th Divisions, the latter being between the Lens and Hulluch roads. The 12th Division was taken out of G.H.Q. reserve and placed in the First Army reserve. There was much excitement, for fresh orders were received to move at short notice and the tension was increased by the frequent reconnaissance of divisional fronts. The only casualties during May were one killed and another wounded, accidents during bombing practice. Two drafts of 42 other ranks reported for duty.

Early in June the Battalion was attached to the 1st Division at Les Brebis and employed in rebuilding the village and reserve lines during the night hours. When at Bully Grenay on June 3rd four additional Lewis guns were issued to the 9th Essex, making a total of eight out of the sixteen with which the Battalion was eventually armed. Two guns were allotted to each company. The 12th Division ceased to belong to 1st Division reserve and became I Corps reserve, being held in readiness to reinforce the I Corps front, which ran from Colonne to Hohenzollern Redoubt. The 9th Essex were, therefore, back at Lapugnoy on June 8th, where a letter was received from the commander of the 1st

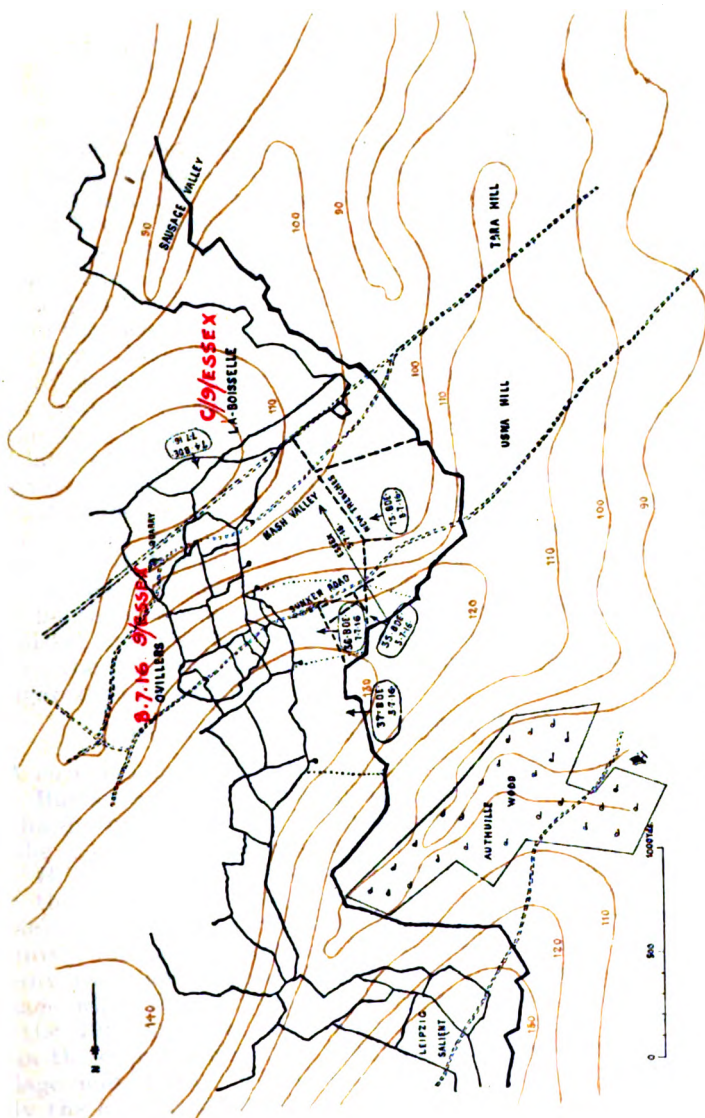
Division thanking them for the work upon the defence lines. The weather became very bad in the middle of the month, there being heavy rains and thunderstorms. It was more like a cold early March than the Month of Roses. Training in assault upon trenches had to be abandoned and sites marked by flags were used in substitution. The Battalion entrained at Lillers on June 16th and reached Longeau early on the next day. Disembarkation was delayed owing to trains containing a heavy battery and French troops being unexpectedly pushed into the siding ahead of them. The 9th Essex marched to Vignacourt, a distance of $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles, without a man falling out, though about thirty who had left the ranks caught the Battalion up at the various halts. The 12th Division had joined the III Corps in the Fourth Army, the 9th Essex reporting with a strength of 27 officers and 918 other ranks. Everybody was on the *qui vive* and preparations were busily going forward for the coming offensive. On June 18th the Battalion commander (Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Lewes) and three company commanders were sent by 'bus to Albert to reconnoitre the British lines there and the approaches north of the town. Meanwhile, there was company training in the Forêt de Vignacourt and upon the open ground adjoining the Bois du Crocquet. The operation in which the Brigade was expected to participate was practised at Montonvillers on June 20th, and three days later the Division was also exercised. Then came the move forward. On June 27th the 9th Essex commenced their approach march to the forward zone via Flesselles and Villers Bocage and occupied billets for the night in Molliens au Bois. At this village orders were received to delay the march to Franvillers, for the offensive had been postponed for 48 hours on account of bad weather. On June 30th the Battalion moved to Franvillers, ready for all that came during the eventful month of July. The strength was 30 officers and 961 other ranks. There had been three drafts of a total strength of 88, 47 of whom were attached from the Bedfordshires. The only casualty was the death of 2nd Lieut. W. A. Phillimore, who was killed whilst attached to the 251st Tunnelling Company.

The Battalion was in reserve at Hénencourt Wood during the eventful daylight hours of July 1st. At 6.30 p.m. it moved through the village, the march being hampered by the blocking of the roads to Albert by other troops also marching up to the line in relief of the 8th Division, which had suffered severely. The 9th Essex occupied the line opposite Oivillers on July 2nd. They were in support of the 5th Royal Berks and 7th Suffolks and during the day took shelter in the railway cutting near Marmont bridge from possible hostile counter bombardment whilst the 19th Division was operating against La Boisselle.

Orders were received that the Brigade was to attack Oivillers in the early morning of July 4th, but the time was subsequently altered to 3 a.m. on the 3rd, which prevented the thorough

reconnaissance of the ground which had been planned. The Battalion occupied the following communication trenches—"B" Company in St. Vincent, "C" Company in Furness Street, "A" Company in Barrow Street and "D" Company in Mitchell Street, with Battalion headquarters in Rycroft Street. Each company had its head in touch with the rear platoons of the leading battalion of the Brigade. Berkshires and Suffolks assembled in Border Street.

"The march of the Battalion," wrote a member of the 9th, "to take up position for this first Somme battle will for ever be remembered by those engaged. Innumerable gun flashes lit the darkness of the night; they seemed endless and as one approached the line, the noise was deafening. After what appeared to be endless marching, we reached the trenches in front of Ovillers. They were of hard chalk and with the bad weather not at all easy to negotiate without trench boards. In moving to positions for attack, the congestion in the trenches was awful and mortally wounded men could not be moved. Zero hour arrived when it was raining, visibility was poor, with bitter retaliation by way of machine gun fire from the enemy." At 2.15 everything was ready, when a message was received that zero hour had been changed to 3.7 a.m. The attack took place promptly to time after a heavy bombardment and at 3.20 a.m. the leading lines of the Battalion followed in support. Considerable difficulty had been experienced in reaching the front line and the last of the Berkshires and Suffolks had disappeared into the darkness before the first Company had leapt the parapet in support. The direction of the attack was 90° magnetic; that was to say, in a quarter left direction from the front line. Direction was not well maintained, chiefly because the objectives were indistinguishable and the jumping-off places were not square to the enemy line. This difficulty notwithstanding, however, the leading battalions over-ran the enemy's front and support lines and parties entered Ovillers, together with men of the 9th Essex. The latter unit had suffered severely whilst crossing the open ground by machine gun fire from the flanks and the village, and the waves became a series of detached parties under either an officer or N.C.O. "A," "D" and three platoons of "B" Company had advanced in platoon waves, but the lines were not always in touch, the initial cause being the difficulty of getting the companies deployed along the front trench so as to move simultaneously owing to their damaged condition and the number of wounded and other details making their way back by the communication trenches up which the 9th Essex had groped their way. Two platoons of "B" Company got over the German front line and were then held up by a high command Circular Trench which overlooked the ground which had been won. The remainder of "B" Company and "A" Company almost reached the German line and



Positions of Brigades During the Operations Against Ovilles.

were then held up by machine gun fire from Circular Trench, which had stayed the advance of the other portion of "B" Company. "D" Company also made progress on the left, but they, too, were stopped by the machine guns of Circular Trench, the wire of which had been renewed after the British bombardment had ceased. Survivors from the enemy front line had sought shelter in this miniature fortress when the Brigade advanced and delivered therefrom the bombing attacks which were to have a potent effect in staying the Brigade's offensive. The first to feel the influence of this counter-attack were the two platoons of "B" Company, who were forced back, sadly depleted, to the German front line. Battalion headquarters had been in the meantime moved to the junction of St. Vincent Street and Border Street, and no information having come to hand, Lieut.-Colonel Lewes and the Adjutant went forward to ascertain the situation. Parties could be seen coming back on the right of the 37th Brigade, which had attacked with the 35th Brigade, and later other parties sought to return on the right flank of the Brigade. A small detachment of the Essex, about fifty men, started digging in on a small ridge or bank which overlooked the enemy's first line and extra tools for that purpose were sent up by the 7th Norfolks. Information was very difficult to obtain and of news of the exact whereabouts of the Berkshires and Suffolks there was none. About 4 a.m. the attack had come to a standstill and the survivors withdrew again to the front line, where the 7th Norfolks took over and enabled the Essex to reorganize in Ribble Street.

HOW LA BOISSELLE WAS TAKEN.

A curious mistake occurred during the attack, which deprived the Battalion of "C" Company (Kennefick), but which had, by happy mischance, the fortunate result of materially assisting in the capture of La Boisselle. "C" Company were on the left of "B" Company and should have advanced in line with them, but they lost touch and, moving in a south-easterly direction in lines of platoons, straight across Mush Alley, they struck the German line north-west of La Boisselle. They carried the enemy front and support trenches and went right through the village, where they met the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and Gloucesters, of the 19th Division, who were advancing upon La Boisselle from the opposite direction. Much bomb fighting ensued in the village and when "C" Company were withdrawn at 2 p.m. only the north-eastern corner of the village remained in German occupation. "C" Company secured 150 prisoners in their bold essay, who were handed over to the 19th Division for safe conduct to Albert. Thus, although Oivillers remained untaken, La Boisselle, another strongly fortified point in the line, had succumbed to the bold attack of "C" Company. "Though there was a grave error," wrote the Battalion Commander, "in

the initial leading and the attack on Ovillers was deprived of a whole company, which may or may not have made all the difference, I would like to point out that the handling and conduct of the Company from this point were most creditable, especially as it was considerably shaken by the bombardment of our trenches just before the attack from which Furness Street suffered badly. I wish to bring to your notice the manner in which Captain E. H. Kennefick and 2nd Lieut. R. G. Karn, admirably assisted by C.S.M. J. Collins, rallied and led the men into action, which I consider deserving of reward." He also specially mentioned Captain E. B. Hickox for the handling of his company during the main attack on Ovillers. Though survivors of the leading battalions were passing through, he held to his position and went from one flank to the other to keep himself informed of the situation, regardless of his safety. Twelve officers and 386 other ranks were returned as casualties or as missing, the dead including Captain Henry Arthur Wyatt Peake, Lieut. E. D. Bestall, 2nd Lieuts. Ernest Harold Farley, Clyde Fairbanks Maxwell and Walter Frederick Noble. The Battalion leader, Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Lewes, was wounded and Major C. C. Spooner took over command.

Commenting upon the lessons to be derived from the operation, the acting C.O. wrote : " It appears the enemy does not hold the front line and lives in cellars and dug-outs on which the artillery had no effect, and trusted on checking the attack by the Circular Trench, while using his old front line merely to deliver with bombing counter-attack when the attacking troops were rattled by the difficulty to advance in front. I would suggest that the reserve battalion, if it is not going to advance beyond our lines directly behind the other battalions, should not be sent forward to the front and support lines until the attacking columns have left our lines. In this case, the 7th Norfolks pushed up the communication trenches into the front line before my battalion was clear and, in consequence, I had considerable difficulty in getting to the front line myself and a great deal of delay was caused in communicating to advanced Brigade report centre, St. Vincent Street being two deep with Norfolks for at least a 100 yards of its length. A point which I consider requires special attention in an attack is that a special communication trench should be kept solely for runners and officers for communication and information purposes, in which all the attacking battalion and headquarters and advance brigade report centre should be situated before " zero." As battalions advance these could be taken over, i.e.

" Sentries must be posted at either end to prevent any unauthorized person entering. This, I think, is most important, as I had very great difficulty myself in getting to Brigade report centre each time, when it was all important to get there quickly, and an orderly would have had still greater difficulty, as he cannot order men to kneel down and walk over their backs, as I had to do."

A further example of the delay caused by trenches becoming blocked was forthcoming exactly twelve months later. A C.Q.M.S. of the 9th Essex recalls that, with a carrying party from another battalion, it took from 10 p.m. till practically 4 a.m. to get from the dump at Monchy through the trenches to his company headquarters in the front line—a distance of not more than two miles!! There was only one available communication trench for both in and out traffic, and almost a constant procession of wounded, stretcher cases and retiring working parties caused constant stoppages and confusion. As a matter of fact, this C.Q.M.S. was the only one in the Battalion to get rations through on that particular occasion. This he succeeded in doing with the loss of only one bag of biscuits.

Throughout July 4th the Battalion remained in Ribble Street reorganizing, and the next day moved back into billets in the northern part of Albert, where it remained until July 7th, when, with a strength of 18 officers and 487 other ranks, it moved to the Usna-Tara line. The march was so muddy that it seemed to one member of the Battalion that the only way to make progress was to pull one leg out with the hands before putting the next foot forward! That night it went into the Ovivillers-La Boisselle area to relieve the 36th Brigade, which had been reduced to 250 men in their successful attack which enabled lodgment to be made on the spur on which Ovivillers stood. The 9th Essex accordingly took over all the Brigade's positions, but had hardly settled down, when, in the early morning of July 8th, a German attack caused prompt retaliation in which splendid work was done by "B" Company (Captain Hickox) and C.S.M. Waters. The enemy headquarters dug-out was taken and the line advanced 200 yards. A strong counter-attack, however, caused the Battalion to relinquish one hundred yards of the captured trenches, in which three of the best-known officers were killed, viz., Major Clement Ignatius Ryan, Captain Gilford Montier Reeves and Captain Edward Hamerton Kennefick. Despite frequent bursts of shelling, the Battalion advanced their positions again to the old German third line, which they held notwithstanding a heavy bombardment. The Essex were relieved on July 9th and occupied billets in Varennes, having suffered total casualties of three officers killed, nine other ranks killed, 65 wounded and 11 missing, a total of 88. The Battalion marched to billets in the Bois de Warnimont on July 10th, where, the next day, Major B. O. Richards, D.S.O., of the Royal West Kents, took over command. Captain H. R. Bowen, with a party of two officers and 125 other ranks, took up billets at Bertrancourt on July 13th, to assist the 4th Division in work behind the line. "A" Company (Captain Bullen), of 125 rifles, was detailed, on July 15th, to form part of a composite battalion to stand by in readiness to move at two hours' notice. In the meantime drafts were being incorporated and training actively proceeding,

the Battalion having been brought up to a strength of 808 of all ranks. Captain Bowen's detachment returned on July 16th. A change came on July 21st, when the Essex reached brigade reserve in Mailly Maillet and bivouacked in the wood there. Parties were employed upon draining communication trenches, and, among others, a draft from the Northants reported for duty. Another move was made on July 25th, when hutments were occupied in a wood north-west of the village. Billets in Varennes were taken over next day, when the strength was 24 officers and 917 other ranks. The Battalion was next allotted hutments on the western edge of the village of Bouzincourt, where some cases of sickness occurred. On August 7th the Essex moved to the Bouzincourt-Albert line in brigade reserve and supplied large carrying parties for front line units. Then, on August 10th, the 5th Royal Berkshires were relieved at Oivillers. The Battalion was saluted by hostile shell-fire, one of the first missiles killing 2nd-Lieut. Montague Beavan Tench and wounding two other officers. The bombardment increased in intensity and all but two platoons were withdrawn from the front line. The next day the advanced bomb store was blown in and up to the second line the trenches were practically destroyed, tools and wire being blown to pieces. The gunfire slackened early next day, having caused the 9th Essex no fewer than 110 casualties. The 35th Brigade was designated for an attack on Sixth Avenue, and, with the 7th Norfolks, the Essex formed up in No Man's Land at night under the protection of a barrage and at 10.30 p.m. on August 12th moved forward and captured the objective without opposition. Strong points were immediately constructed to cover the flanks, patrols were sent out and the saps were made good by bombing squads. At 11.30 p.m. the Germans retaliated against Point 78 across the open, for their shelter trenches had been destroyed by artillery fire. The two waves were stopped by Lewis gun and rifle fire and attacks by hostile bombing parties on the barricades were only successful in forcing the Essex bombers back a few yards. The Germans again counter-attacked with bombs, machine guns and snipers early on the morning of August 13th and, as grenades ran out, the line was forced back about fifty yards. With the timely arrival of a fresh supply the enemy were driven out again. Later that day the Battalion went out of the line and bivouacked south-west of Bouzincourt, moves being made on successive days to Acheux, Bois de Warnimont, Souchez and Gouy-en-Artois, where, on August 20th, Major-General Scott, the divisional commander, presented ribbons to the Essex and Norfolk battalions. The next day the Battalion went into billets in Arras, where training was undertaken in the squares and parks under shelter of the trees. All movements in the city had to be made in single file, close to the houses, as the French feared that if troops were observed a bombardment would result. On August 29th the

5th Royal Berkshires were relieved. The sector lay between the Arras-Cambrai and the Arras-Bapaume roads, the Battalion headquarters being at Ronville. The enemy were comparatively quiet and the men were busily employed in improving the support trench, which was the defensive line. Only sentry groups were posted in the front line at the head of the communication trenches. Patrols found that the German line was apparently unoccupied, but the wire was twenty yards wide and very thick. A gap in the Battalion's wire, caused by shell-fire, was made good in daylight. Drafts to the number of 170 reported during August, including a party of fifty from the 8th Essex (Cyclists).

LIEUT.-COLONEL LEWES SAYS GOOD-BYE.

Patrols went out from different points on September 1st to report upon the state of the enemy's wire, which was from twenty to forty yards in depth, very thick and without gaps. With the exception of an occasional shell, the enemy were quiet, though on September 2nd damage was done to the billets, which caused five casualties. Another shell, on September 4th, killed a sergeant and wounded an officer and three other ranks. That same night a raiding party of 12 other ranks, under 2nd-Lieut. Whalley, left the trenches at 10.10 with a view to securing a prisoner for identification purposes, ascertaining what preparations were being made to liberate gas, and observing if the line was held in any strength. An artillery barrage opened on the enemy's front trenches at 11 p.m. and three minutes later shifted to the support line, upon which the raiding party advanced rapidly on to the enemy's wire, which had been cut by trench mortars. It was so thick, however, that it still presented a very difficult obstacle. The night, too, was very dark and the party could only move ahead slowly. When at 11.14 they had worked through thirty yards of tangled wire, they were subjected to a bombing attack by the Germans, with heavy rifle fire from the right flank. Three of the German bombers were killed, but the party had then to retire, for the barrage shortened at 11.18 p.m. It was established that the line was strongly held, knowledge which was of value to the authorities because of the report of a general enemy retirement. The casualties were two men wounded. The next night an officer patrol reconnoitred sap M4 and a tunnel which had been discovered the previous night, but although they made a thorough search, they could not secure a prisoner. When the Battalion was relieved by the 5th Royal Berkshires it went into divisional reserve in Arras, but every available man was put to work upon preparing the communication trenches for the coming winter. Little movement was permitted in the city in daylight, but at night it became a hive of industry, many of the inhabited houses having been converted into estaminets. Lieut.-Colonel C. G. Lewes returned to duty on September 9th, but on the 18th said

"Good-bye" to the 9th Essex—whom he had raised, trained and commanded with such success—upon appointment to the command of the 147th Brigade. Lieut.-Colonel Richards took over command of the Battalion. On September 14th the Battalion was once more in the trenches and was out again a week later. On September 27th-28th the Essex were relieved in Arras by the 6th Somerset Light Infantry, of the 14th Division, and removed by motor lorries to Souich. On the last day of the month they moved on by motor 'bus to within two miles of Albert and went under canvas half a mile south of Bécordel-Bécourt in the XV Corps area, Fourth Army.

The stay was not of long duration, for on October 2nd the Battalion moved to Montauban. Old trenches and shelters were occupied. The weather was bad and great discomfort was experienced. The men were employed for some days in the construction of shelters of corrugated iron, sandbags and waterproof canvas. This very much improved the general conditions, though the weather still interfered considerably with training. "In our third trip to the Somme battlefield we first came into the active area as divisional reserve in Bernafay Wood. This position," wrote Mr. F. Knight, "gave us a foretaste of rigours to come. The Battalion was scattered in a small, shallow valley in any place where it could make itself more or less comfortable, the most usual form being shelters at the side of the banks of the old trenches roofed with corrugated iron. As the weather was exceedingly wet, the walls of these shelters were not exactly stable and it was no unusual thing for one to get quite a load of wet earth down one's neck whilst lying down in them. This was often the case when a nearby 6in. naval gun was shelling towards Bapaume about every quarter of an hour during the night. Rations were limited, mainly biscuits and bully-beef. A bread ration was practically non-existent and bully stew day after day was not at all appetizing. It was simply spoiling useful water. The working parties at night were feats of endurance. Two I recall especially. One was to clear the main road to the line of its surface of mud. To do this in the dark whilst all manner of traffic was passing was the work of supermen, and I'm afraid that although much effort was expended, the result of our labour was hardly noticeable. Another was to dig during the night a communication trench to the front line. This was certainly a more definite job, but the incessant shell and machine gun-fire caused a good few casualties and undoubtedly made us dig quicker and deeper than usual. The journey to the line and back on these working parties was awful. The general gloom and waste of the battlefield, the mud and rain, derelict tanks dotted here and there (which made us wonder if these new weapons of warfare were quite so efficient as at first supposed) caused general foreboding. The last lap of the return journey through Delville Wood on a slippery duck-board track,

with the dead lying unburied on both sides and shell holes filled with water, with the thought that if one slipped there was possibility of being drowned, made our wet, muddy and tumbledown shelters in Bernafay Wood as welcome as home itself. Such is the value of comparison."

The 7th Royal Sussex were relieved in the support line on October 10th, and Lieut. J. F. Riches was killed the next day. Early on the morning of October 12th, "C" and "D" Companies of the Essex moved up to the west of Gueudecourt for the purpose of holding the front trenches, whilst the Norfolks and Suffolks made a gallant attack upon the enemy front line and entered it, but could not retain it. In this enterprise the 1st Essex were also involved. The advanced companies of the 9th Essex crept over the top of the support trenches in small parties in order to reach the line vacated by the Norfolks and Suffolks, as there were no communication trenches affording cover, and were in position by 3 p.m. At 5.30 p.m. patrols were sent out to obtain news of the attacking battalions, which had failed because of the difficulty in negotiating the wire. "A" and "B" were moved up at 6.30 p.m. and the whole of the brigade front was taken over; two companies in the front line and two in Grid Trench in support.

The enemy were active and shelled frequently whilst parties were out in the early morning of the 13th for the purpose of bringing in the wounded. The bombardment was confined to specific areas and casualties were, therefore, avoided. Trouble was also experienced by reason of shells from our own heavy artillery falling short. The same occurred the next day and a special investigation was made by artillery officers. "We were left in possession of a trench which had more ups than downs," wrote a member of the Essex. "Rain and mud still predominated. The enemy had the 'wind up' and every night his display of fireworks put the Crystal Palace to shame. Rations were scarce and so was water, except that which fell from the heavens almost incessantly. Means of communication were bad and the easiest method was 'over the top'." On October 15th the Battalion moved back to the reserve lines near Flers and two days later, armed again with bombs, tools and special wire cutters, it was in the line once more. 2nd Lieut. W. Davis had been previously detailed to lay out a white tape parallel to the German line over a frontage of about 400 yards and from 50 to 100 yards in front of the British trenches.

THE STORY OF BAYONET TRENCH.

The Battalion was to attack Bayonet Trench, lying north-west of Gueudecourt, and was in position on the tape line at 3.20 a.m. on October 18th. Each company had two platoons in the first wave and the remaining two were the second wave, forty yards behind, carrying tools. The ground was in a heavy condition

owing to the continuous wet weather and the men felt the adverse conditions more severely because of the long march through the rain and mud from Flers to the line. At 3.40 a.m., under protection of a barrage, the two waves went over, keeping splendid alignment. At 3.45 the artillery lifted 150 yards, by which hour the leading men were within 40 to 70 yards of the German line. "C" Company, on the left, gained its objective without difficulty, but "B," "A" and "D" on the right were held up by intact wire. The officers sought for gaps, but were picked off by German snipers from the trench. Lieut. C. J. Brewer, commanding "A" Company, succeeded in forcing his way through, but 2nd-Lieut. William Davis and 2nd Lieut. Arthur Evans were killed in the attempt. Thrice wounded and without support, Brewer was obliged to retire without finding a gap for the Company to pass through. "B" and "D" Companies were equally unsuccessful. The three companies, therefore, retired, and "C" Company, smitten with fire on both flanks, which rendered their position untenable, had to follow suit. The casualties were seven officers and 79 other ranks. The total from October 12th to 18th inclusive was eight officers and 150 other ranks. "The night we moved up to the attack," recalled Mr. F. Knight, "it was pouring with rain, and, heavily equipped as we were, the going was very bad. Slipping and sliding, covered with mud, we arrived in the front line absolutely worn out. The crowning blow came when each bomber was handed a box of twelve Mills bombs. Already overloaded, it seemed impossible to carry more. Nevertheless, we ranged ourselves in No Man's Land ready for zero. A more dejected crew would be hard to find. We were beaten before we started. We attacked with the opening barrage, but were held up by machine gunfire and uncut wire. Little progress was made, although some managed to gain a footing in the German line. Finally we retired to our own trench. It was not yet light. We had no idea of whether the enemy would counter-attack, so we of 'C' built and manned a bombing stop, only to find, by the light of day, that instead of the enemy being on the other side, it was men of one of our other companies. The bombing section of 'C' Company still held the position, which was forward, until the afternoon, when we found that the remainder of the Battalion had been withdrawn, leaving the Berks. still holding the line. After consultation with a Berks. officer, we decided to retire. This we did in the only way we knew. Having only travelled it at night time we found that it was very exposed by day and we were subject to heavy fire. However, we scraped through and reached our rendezvous, only to find that we were the first arrivals. This was explained, when the remainder of the Battalion arrived an hour or so later, by the fact that there being such a large number, it was necessary to bring them through the trenches and by a long, wearisome, roundabout way. We

again spent a night in Bernafay Wood in bivouacs formed of large waterproof sheets. It poured with rain all night, it was low-lying land, and we awoke to find ourselves lying in about three inches of water."

The Battalion moved back to Montauban the same night and next day marched to Fricourt Camp, then on the 20th to Mametz Wood, where it ceased its temporary attachment to the 36th Brigade and rejoined the 35th Brigade. On successive days the Battalion marched to Dernancourt and Ribemont, at which latter place it took 'buses for Lattre St. Quentin and, again on foot, reached Agnez-les-Duisans. There, on October 24th, the village baths were allotted to the Battalion and two companies had their first bath for over a month. The 9th Essex took 'buses for Arras, arrived at 6.50 p.m. on October 26th, and went into the line at the same spot that it occupied the previous September. Enemy trench mortars were active, but relief came and at the end of the month the Battalion was again billeted in Arras.

During the early part of November the 9th Essex were in and out of the line in exchange with the 5th Royal Berkshires, the chief annoyance being the accurate shooting of the hostile trench mortar batteries. Late at night on November 14th two Germans were suddenly encountered in the front line by a patrol of two men. The leading man of the latter was mortally wounded by a revolver bullet and the enemy escaped over the parapet before the second man was able to fire. Gas had been recently liberated from the right sector of the divisional front and it was thought the object of the German patrol was to see if gas cylinders had been installed on their front. Lieut.-Colonel B. O. Richards, D.S.O., relinquished command of the Battalion on November 16th; he was succeeded by Major H. E. Trevor, Northamptonshire Regiment, late brigade major of the 37th Brigade. When the 9th Essex went into the line again on November 19th a great deal of wiring had to be done at night, for in several parts wire was non-existent and some of the posts were far apart. It was noticed that the enemy had cleared their wire for a distance of 30 yards opposite the right company. Machine guns, trench mortars and Lewis guns fired on the gap. A patrol later reported that the gap remained unfilled. Between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. another patrol found two large parties working on each side of the gap, with a strong covering party in front. Tension remained keen all the next day, with a misty morning adding to the concern. No raiding party was observed, however. Before the Battalion went back to the Cavalry Barracks, in Arras, a German aeroplane was brought down within the lines by anti-aircraft guns in co-operation with British aircraft. It fell from a height of about 5,000 feet and was smashed to pieces, both pilot and observer being killed. Maps were found in their possession which gave most of our battery positions. When the Battalion had completed a further turn of front line duty

two platoons were left to reinforce the Berkshires, who had a party of five officers and 70 other ranks training for a trench raid. The Battalion went in again on November 27th. The trenches of the left company were found to have been badly knocked about and the wire cut to pieces by trench mortars. It was a reply to a trench raid which had been made the night before by the 35th Division on the left. The end of the month—which marked also the end of the Battles of the Somme, 1916—was without incident, most of the men being employed in wiring.

The Battalion was in and out of the line for the greater part of December. During the intervals of relief from trench duty extra teams were trained in the use of Lewis guns owing to the establishment having been increased from eight to sixteen and to the casualties which had occurred in the Somme battles. The Essex marched back to the Cavalry Barracks for the last time in 1916 on December 18th and moved next day to Wanquetin, thence to Magnicourt on December 20th, where Christmas was spent, after which half the Battalion moved to the adjacent village of Gouy-en-Ternois. Training and sport were the chief occupations until December 31st, when, by route march, the Battalion went into billets at Maizières and on the last day of the year as many men as possible attended church parade.

New Year Day, 1917, was celebrated by an inspection by Lieut.-Colonel G. A. Trent, 5th Northhamptons, temporarily commanding the 35th Brigade, upon Brigadier General Solly Flood's transfer to the command of the Third Army School. The following day there was another inspection, this time by Major-General Scott, commanding the Division, at which medal ribbons were presented. Training, lectures and sport were the chief incidents of the days which followed, the last-named including a marathon race in which the first thirty men home were excused the following week's route march. This route march took place on January 12th in full marching order, and only one man fell out. He was subsequently certified to be unfit. Whilst this useful work was proceeding, the 12th Division had, on January 14th, become responsible for a little over a mile of front, running from a point 700 yards south of Faubourg St. Sauveur to the River Scarpe. The enemy were on an average 200 yards away, though near to Blangy village they lay within eight yards. The 37th Brigade held this portion of the line and the other two brigades remained in the training areas, where for some days there was heavy snow, which hindered instruction. On January 21st the commander of the Division inspected 75 men of bantam size serving with the Battalion, who were to be sent to the base as unfit. Brigadier General Berkeley Vincent, Inniskilling Dragoons, took over command of the Brigade on January 28th. To the end of January training was busily continued. The three drafts which reported comprised 157 men, of whom one party of 75 were from the Essex Yeomanry.

On February 1st the Battalion moved into billets at Izel-les-Hameau, less a party of four officers and 250 men who were engaged in the surrounding villages hutting and banking under R.E. supervision. A new organization was devised, whereby each platoon was made a complete fighting unit, having one section each of bombers, Lewis gunners, rifle grenadiers and riflemen. From February 6th to the end of the month the Essex were at Agnez-les-Duisans and the greater part of the Battalion personnel was at work on light railway construction, in respect of which, later on, a letter was received from O.C. 10th Railway Company, R.E., speaking in high terms of their efforts: "A hardworking, keen battalion. All ranks take an interest in the work and the labour is well organized. One of the best infantry battalions I have had on railway construction." The weather was wintry and Private H. Savill remembers that the ground was frozen to a depth of 2ft. Water was at a premium owing to the pumps being frozen. Washing water was obtained by melting ice and on one occasion twelve men washed and shaved in a Nestlé's milk tin half-full of water. Bread was usually placed in an iron ration bag and taken to bed by the men to prevent its getting frozen. If it were left in the open it was not unusual to find teeth meeting hard upon a piece of ice even after the bread had been toasted. The Battalion marched into the cellars of the Museum at Arras on March 3rd. The 9th Essex were destined for the front line again and on March 16th relieved the 7th Suffolks.

THE ARRAS OFFENSIVE.

It was known that an offensive was in contemplation from Arras in the Spring and the training from the opening of the New Year had been designed to that end. In addition, extensive works had to be undertaken : " In order to avoid loss to personnel from retaliation during our bombardment, which was to continue for four days, dug-outs were to be made in the front system to accommodate 2,400 men of each division, and to give them sleeping facilities ; caves which had been formed by the excavation of the chalk, mainly to build the churches of St. Sauveur and Ronville, were to be adapted as dwelling places and connected up, the cellars of the Petite Place and Grande Place in Arras being made inter-communicating ; tunnels had to be constructed leading from the Main Sewer, along which there was a side walk, to the caves, and from the caves extending underneath No Man's Land, and for these purposes tunnelling companies were employed, largely augmented by working parties from the troops to do the carrying ; light railways had to be laid ; communication trenches to be greatly increased and some widened to take stretchers ; positions prepared for the influx of batteries that would come into action at the last moment, and large stores of ammunition, which was now unlimited, installed for them ; dumps of rations and ammunition of all descriptions had to be formed and water stored. It is not surprising, therefore, to know that working parties, numbering 2,500 men, were found daily. In consequence the allocation of the three infantry brigades resulted in one being in the trenches, one in the training area and one providing working parties." The Battalion thus had a feeling of increased responsibility when it went into the line, being saluted by slight hostile shelling. The 5th Royal Berkshires successfully raided from the Essex line at 7 a.m. on March 17th, to which the enemy replied with an intense bombardment, considerable damage being done to the trenches. The next day the artillery duel continued, but with less damage from the German guns. Patrols constantly searched No Man's Land at night and found the enemy alert and holding his positions in full strength, although it was known that a withdrawal farther south was in progress towards St. Quentin. There was a hostile effort against the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers on the right of the 9th Essex on March 20th, and again on the 21st, but the Battalion held its own and retained the ground which it had gained. The 7th Norfolks took over from the 9th Essex on March 21st and the latter went into billets at Petite Place, Arras. A raiding party commanded by Captain Hickson, with 2nd-Lieuts. C. Collins, R. J. Savill, E. R. Capper and H. Wardall, and 64

other ranks, searched the German lines on March 23rd. No prisoners were taken, but the principal object in view was amply realized, for it was found the Germans were holding their trenches in strong force. Five men were killed and eight wounded and it was believed that the enemy lost heavily as a result of the encounter. The Battalion left Arras by the Porte de Baudimont on March 26th, and marched to Izel-lez-Hameau, for further training. Thence, on March 28th, the Battalion moved to the training ground north of Lignereuil, where trenches had been dug similar to those occupied by the enemy, and advance upon them was practised in artillery formation. The next day there was similar practice against a trench system representing Feuchy Chapel Redoubt. Training went on with great animation during the first days of April and then the Battalion moved, on April 5th, to Agnez, where it slept under canvas, subsequently proceeding to the cellars of the Museum, Arras, the next day, where until April 8th preparations were made for the offensive.

The Battle of Arras in the Spring of 1917 found the troops brimful of keenness and eager to get at grips once again with the enemy. It was an operation which achieved great results not only because of the capture of important tactical positions and the breaking of great gaps in the enemy's defensive line, but it raised the confidence of the British Army to a height which was not eclipsed until the final advance which began in August, 1918. The Arras campaign is now best remembered for the taking of Vimy Ridge, but it also had other important results in so much that it freed Arras from the grip of enemy investment and opened the way towards Douai. French co-operation on the right was arranged in the later stages, but, unfortunately, was not so successful as had been hoped and the Battle of Arras was in essence wholly a British triumph. The attack was entrusted to the Third and First Armies, with support in subordinate operations by the Fourth and Fifth Armies. The offensive started in the early morning of April 9th and extended from a point just north of Croisilles, south-east of Arras, to a point just south of Givenchy-en-Gohelle at the northern foot of Vimy Ridge. The frontage was nearly 15 miles and the objectives included between four and five miles of the northern end of the celebrated Hindenburg Line. The 9th Essex were in the 12th Division, part of VI Corps of the Third Army. The success of the first attack was according to expectation. Whilst there was also pronounced success on the left, progress was even more striking on the right about Arras, where a wide gap was torn in the German defences. Unfortunately, the weather proved unusually unkind on the subsequent days and heavy snowfalls inflicted great hardships upon the troops and hindered the transport of artillery and munitions, thus enabling the enemy to obtain a much needed respite for reorganization and readjustment of the shattered line. Monchy-le-Preux was

entered and held against counter-attack on April 11th, an exploit in which the Essex Yeomanry played a notable part. On the next day a portion of the Hindenburg Line was occupied, and that same day there was heavy fighting about Rœux, lying north of the Scarpe. The successes on the British left caused a substantial enemy withdrawal, whilst on April 14th there was heavy fighting at Monchy-le-Preux, in which 1st Battalion The Essex Regiment was especially prominent. So far as his own plans were concerned, Sir Douglas Haig stated that it would have been possible to have stayed the offensive on the Arras front, for he had secured all the immediate objects of attack, but he could not relax his efforts, as he had to support the French offensive, fixed to be launched on April 16th. The next British attack was delivered on April 23rd on a front of about nine miles from Croisilles to Gavrelle, and again progress was made, particularly in the direction of Gavrelle. The next assault was directed on a front of about eight miles north of Monchy-le-Preux on April 28th and it resulted in the capture, among other points, of Arleux-en-Gohelle. The final effort of the series opened on May 5th, when the Third and First Armies were set in movement from Fontaine-les-Croisilles to Fresnoy and the Fifth Army made a second attack upon the Hindenburg Line in the neighbourhood of Bullecourt. Along the whole front of sixteen miles much success was again obtained, including the seizure of Fresnoy and a portion of the Hindenburg Line east of Bullecourt. Although the main offensive had spent itself, fighting went on during the greater part of May on the Arras front. Fresnoy was retaken by the enemy, but Rœux at last fell to the 4th Division (in which the 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment was serving) and also the western face of Greenland Hill. Activity shifted to the front of the Second Army, where Messines Ridge was taken mainly as the result of a colossal mining operation. The results of the battle were most striking. On the British front during April 19,500 prisoners were captured, including 400 officers, together with 257 guns. The line was advanced to a depth exceeding five miles on a total frontage of twenty miles, representing a gain of some sixty square miles of territory. "A great improvement had been effected in the general situation of our troops on the front attacked and the capture of Vimy Ridge has removed a constant menace to the security of our line."

THE FIRST ATTACK.

At the opening of the Arras offensive, the VI Corps had the 3rd Division on the right, the 12th Division in the centre and the 15th Division on the left. The task confronting it on April 9th was the capture of Wancourt-Feuchy line, which entailed penetration to the depth of 4,000 yards, after which the 37th Division was to pass through and take Monchy-le-Preux, a small town on a commanding position overlooking the Cambrai



C.S.M. and SERGEANTS of "C" Coy, 9th ESSEX, ARRAS, DEC, 1916,

Road. The 12th Division had the 37th Brigade on the right and the 36th on the left. The first object was to seize what was known as the Black Line to a depth of 800 yards and then on to the Blue Line, containing a series of strong redoubts, entailing an advance of a further 1,000 yards. This objective attained, the 35th Brigade was to pass through and, after advancing 2,500 yards, to take what was described as the Brown Line, comprising the Wancourt-Feuchy trench, in which was a strong post known as Feuchy Chapel Redoubt. It will be remembered that the 9th Essex had been previously practised upon a replica of this redoubtable work. The first objective was completely over-run and in the effort against the second line Sergeant Cator, of the 7th East Surreys, won the Victoria Cross by a deed of exceptional daring. Single-handed, he took his Lewis gun forward against an enemy M.G. position, killing the hostile team, together with the officer, and brought back the papers of the last-named. The Blue Line had not been wholly taken when the time came for the 35th Brigade to pass through, but General Scott did not stay the movement, feeling certain that the advance of the brigade would determine the enemy's hold upon the second line. His expectation proved correct. The second line was completely in our hands at 1.5 p.m., and the capture of the third line was immediately commenced. The 35th Brigade caught the enemy on the run and hastened the impetus of his withdrawal. The 7th Norfolks seized the Maison Rouge and the 9th Essex gained the Feuchy Chapel Redoubt, but were then caught up by uncut wire and machine guns at Church Work. The tanks could not give the expected assistance because two had been set on fire by enemy shelling and two had stuck in the mud. A line was consequently taken up along the Feuchy Road, the 3rd Division having been also held upon the right. The 5th Royal Berkshires, on the left, were faced by four German batteries of artillery firing at point blank range, and had supremest joy that can come to infantry, that of getting amongst the artillery by short rushes and seizing no fewer than 18 field guns, four howitzers and 40 prisoners. The guns were promptly turned upon the retreating enemy. The Berkshires' onslaught was finally stayed by the uncut wire towards Orange Hill and the Battalion took up a line on Feuchy Road in continuation of that held by the Essex. Church Work was evacuated next day and the 37th Division passed through to attack Monchy-le-Preux, which they entered on April 11th, with the assistance of the 8th Cavalry Brigade. The 12th Division became VI Corps reserve, but remained along the Feuchy Road, where it suffered much from the violent snow storms which distinguished the Eastertide of 1917. Early the next day the Division relieved the division which had taken Monchy, the 35th Brigade being in reserve. It was in turn relieved on the night of April 12th-13th by the 29th Division

and moved back to the caves in Arras. The Division had on its own front penetrated to a depth of 4,000 yards at a cost of 2,018 casualties, and had captured, beside guns and war material, over 1,200 prisoners. The VI Corps was rejoined on April 24th, when the 35th Brigade took over a frontage from the north-eastern corner of Monchy to River Scarpe. It was marked by groups of trenches rather than a continuous line. There was some hard fighting on April 28th to straighten the line in conformity with a larger operation for the capture of Rœux, in which the 35th Brigade bore the brunt of the struggle, but little ground was gained. The 9th Essex succeeded in getting into the central portion of Rifle Trench and repelled there a counter-attack. Later, however, the Essex were withdrawn to their original trenches, Rœux having resisted the British effort on the left.

The 12th Division had a heavier task on May 3rd, the objective including the town of Pelves. In the course of the attack of the 37th Brigade, Sergeant G. Jarratt, of the 8th Royal Fusiliers, gained the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross. He, with others of the first wave, had been taken prisoners when a grenade fell at his feet in the trench, and he endeavoured to limit the effect of the explosion by immediately jumping upon it with both feet. He succeeded in his object, but his legs were blown off and he died before he could be removed. His companions, however, escaped by his self-sacrifice and rejoined their unit. The Battalion had also an unusual experience. Several of its leading wave being taken prisoner, they were being marched off along Douai Road when British machine gun fire opened upon them. The guard dispersed and the prisoners were able to regain their own lines that night. Both the 36th and 37th Brigades gained ground, but the results were not so complete as had been hoped, the chief stumbling block being Devil's Trench. This was again assaulted by the same brigades on May 12th, but the position was too strong, being overlooked by more commanding ground. On the night of May 16th the Division went out of the battle front and was transferred to the Le Cauroy area, having sustained a total casualty list of 141 officers and 3,380 other ranks.

HOW THE 9th ESSEX ATTACKED FROM ARRAS.

The 9th Essex left the Museum, Arras, at 2.40 a.m. on April 9th (Easter Monday) and proceeded above ground as far as the entrance to the trench at Pont de Fer. The plan that the Battalion should be clear of the exit of the Tunnel in Broad Walk by zero-10m. could not be adhered to owing to the congestion caused by the presence of the 36th and 37th Brigades in the O.B. trenches. Progress through the tunnel proved to be much quicker than anticipated and the men had a halt of one and a half hours in London Cove before entering the O.B. lines. At zero the Battalion



left the Cove and took up the allotted positions, the two leading companies being in the front line and "T" Trench and the other two companies in the support line and Ink Trench. Shelter was obtained in the dug-outs. Casualties were incurred in reaching the jumping-off positions. The enemy had registered accurately a communication trench and one platoon lost ten of its forty effectives. At 10.20 a.m. the Battalion moved forward to the attack, with the 7th Suffolks on the right and 5th Royal Berkshires on the left. The advance was in artillery formation until the imaginary line drawn between Henley Lane and Havant Lane was reached. At this point the Battalion came under fairly heavy machine gun-fire from Hotte Work and also from the direction of Tilloy. The leading companies immediately extended, but shortly afterwards the advance was held up and the men sought cover in shell-holes. With the Hotte Work still in hostile possession, further progress was impossible and so two-inch trench mortars were brought up by the 87th Brigade, but before the gun could be put into action 2nd Lieut. Barker, of the 9th Essex, led his platoon to the flank and after vigorous bombing, captured the garrison of the work to the number of thirty. The advance was then resumed until Observation Post was gained. Progress down the eastern slopes of the Ridge was somewhat slow owing to the point-blank fire from hostile guns in Battery Valley firing point-blank at a distance of 200 yards. Lewis guns were turned upon them and the Essex advanced as occasion offered, with the result that in a final rush nine 77mm. guns were captured, together with the surviving members of the crews. "This was a remarkable experience," wrote Captain Barltrop. "We had hardly known what free movement at the front was like, but as soon as Lieut. Barker had cleared up the machine gun nest which had poured a deadly fire upon us, the Battalion simply streamed forward in a long irregular mass and at a run went cheering up the slopes of the ridge. For the moment it seemed as if we had really broken through, especially when, topping the ridge, we saw nothing but German artillery, most of which was being put out of action by the German gunners, as explosion after explosion bore witness. But here and there gunners fired point blank at us and we soon ceased to cheer, as the shells could hardly miss. We were soon thinned out and the advance by rushes became much more cautious. The gunners ceased their fire as the pressure increased and before long we were in the gun pits, glad to take cover from the machine gun and rifle fire." Movement in Battery Valley continued to be slow for some time, in consequence of the barrage not having lifted in places and also because of fairly intense machine gun-fire from the Feuchy-Wancourt line. Companies had become somewhat disorganized and touch was lost in some cases. "C" Company, under 2nd Lieut. F. C. W. Brown, with its flank on the Cambrai Road, was in touch with the 7th Suffolks

on its right, and advanced, with a platoon of "D" Company, by short rushes until some dead ground was reached. There the Company halted and reorganized before continuing the advance. This company did excellent work and later captured Feuchy Chapel Redoubt without support. "A" Company was very reduced in strength by reason of a number of men having become separated, but, nevertheless, the Company, with a few men of "D" Company, entered Tilloy Lane and worked up the trench as far as Chapel Road. At this point it was discovered the Germans had commenced to tunnel under the road and several casualties were incurred by reason of men attempting to cross in the open. Further progress was delayed until the tunnel could be secured. 2nd Lieut. Peters led a bombing attack up the trench, but could get no farther than the edge of the enemy's wire and after the party had nearly all become casualties and the officer, himself, had been wounded, he was forced to retire, having erected a bomb stop fifty yards from the wire. There enterprising work was done by snipers and Lewis gunners. Another attack was carried out early next morning and was quite successful. "B" Company, on the left and in touch with the Royal Berkshires, found progress from Battery Valley difficult owing to snipers and machine gun-fire. They were reinforced by two platoons of "D" Company, but were still unable to advance appreciably beyond a point one hundred yards west of Chapel Road. It was then about 5 p.m. and about 6.30 the leading battalion of the 37th Division (8th East Lancashires) arrived, but owing to the almost untouched state of the wire in front of the enemy's line, no further action was attempted before dark. A tank was brought up later, but had no sooner arrived than it broke down. In the evening the companies reorganized, took up defensive positions and consolidated the ground gained.

At about mid-day on April 10th operations were resumed, when the 9th Essex attacked on a front from Cambrai Road to a track on the left, the 7th Norfolks being on the left, and the 5th Royal Berkshires co-operating by an attack from the north. The enemy wire remained uncut and a frontal attack was impossible, but bombing raids up the communication trenches were completely successful and both front and support lines were occupied with relatively few casualties. During the two days' operations the Battalion took about eighty prisoners and suffered the loss of five officers and 161 other ranks, including two officers (Captain Yates, R.A.M.C., and 2nd Lieut. Cecil Thomas Gibbs) and 37 other ranks killed or died of wounds.

"The Battalion, after resting for a day in the cellars of the Museum at Arras," wrote Sergeant J. A. Pritchard, recalling the incidents of the fight, "early on the morning of April 9th entered by a small door what appeared to be a small tunnel, but were surprised to find themselves upon a large, well constructed underground roadway. As we proceeded, halting here and

there, we could hear heavy shelling, but never before had we been able to approach the jumping off point in safety. After what seemed an interminable time we finally emerged from a tunnel and found ourselves in the Reserve Lines. The attack was the first time the Battalion felt the freedom of advancing in the open. At zero hour the machine gun-fire was deafening, although the shelling had somewhat subsided. Ignoring the trench ladders, all ranks scrambled rapidly over the top and then, calmly forming up, moved forward. The wire lay about in great masses, but it had been smashed and well cut. All ranks were keen to get in and shouts of 'Come on, the 9th,' and 'Come on, the Essex,' were heard on all sides. One or two hold-ups occurred here and whilst German machine guns sited in shell holes were rounded up, but the advance went steadily on. Up the slope of the ridge we went, which overlooked our objective, flanked on the right by that wonderful landmark, the Cambrai road. We were in open formation, for the enemy seemed well beaten after being turned out of a strong defensive position. Night after night, when wiring on the Arras front, we had heard the transport arrive, but we little thought we should see with our own eyes where they came from. We reached the top of the ridge at last. What a sight! A gentle slope for miles; our objective in sight. The enemy in front were retiring rapidly, but brave men among them fought wonderfully. German gunners were loading their guns and firing on us at point blank range, and the shells whizzed past at a very low trajectory. From one of them Captain Yates, R.A.M.C., was mortally wounded. Sergeant Boar stayed with him, but we passed on, stopping here and there to loose off rounds at the disappearing enemy. The advance continued until at last the whole of our objectives were taken and Feuchy Chapel Redoubt occupied. It was a quarry of immense size at the corner of the Cambrai-Arras and Feuchy Chapel roads. In the morning or afternoon—I had lost sense of time—I accompanied Colonel Trevor to Brigade headquarters at the Cambrai road. On returning we found our headquarters in a dug-out at the corner of the Cambrai-Arras road adjoining Feuchy Chapel Redoubt. Towards dusk I went out and found the Adjutant, Captain G. A. L. Graham, and showed him the way to headquarters. We could have gone on much farther that day had it not been for fatigue. Had there been a fresh division available to go through the 12th Division I have always thought the enemy would have been in a dire dilemma. When the passing through did occur it was too late, for the enemy had had time to reorganize. The night of the 9th was pitch dark and we had to abandon until morning a clearing-up attack by 'D' Company. The attack, by bombing along a trench and going over the top to the one in front, was completely successful, although the morning was cold, very cold. By the way, that night (9th) four jars of rum were sent up for the Battalion, but

some brother soldiers considered they had a superior claim and, as a result, only three arrived. The weather worsened on April 10th, being very cold, with rain in torrents."

DEATH OF LIEUT.-COLONEL H. E. TREVOR.

The Battalion marched back to positions on the O.B. line on April 11th, on relief by the 1st Essex (29th Division), but before the men had settled down orders came to return to the former position at Feuchy Chapel, which was reached about 6 p.m. The 29th Division had been sent forward to Monchy in readiness for an attack on April 14th, in which the 1st Essex and Newfoundlanders suffered severely. Whilst waiting on the O.B. line for definite orders the 9th Essex lost their commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel H. E. Trevor. He went to Brigade headquarters to clear up the situation and whilst there a shell fell on the building, with the result that both Colonel Trevor and the brigade-major, Major T. L. Dent, were killed. The death of the commanding officer was deeply felt by all ranks who had served under him and particularly by those whom he had led into action on April 9th. Major J. L. Hackett took over command of the Battalion. The nucleus which had been left in Arras rejoined and were played through the city by the drums, the first band to play in the streets after the German position had been captured. On April 12th consolidation busily proceeded at Feuchy Chapel, despite shelling by 5.9 guns. The Battalion was relieved early on the morning of April 13th and marched to billets in Arras, where, at 5 p.m., the funeral of Lieut.-Colonel Trevor took place at the British Cemetery on the south side of the rue d'Amiens just in rear of the Convent. A firing party of fifty other ranks was present, under the command of 2nd Lieut. Barker, and the drums sounded the Last Post. "The 10th and 11th April," in the memory of a member of the 9th Essex, "were miserable days. Several things disheartened us—we lost our colonel, whom we liked, for he had proved himself a brave commanding officer; it snowed; the cavalry returned from Monchy, having failed to break through, and we had no sooner got back to Arras anticipating a well deserved rest than we had to return to the line."

The 9th Essex marched to billets at Wanquetin on April 14th, then to Halloy on the 16th, afterwards to billets at Fosseux on April 18th, and finally to Gouy-en-Artois, where Captain G. Green, M.C., took over command upon Major Hackett proceeding to hospital. Training went on for some days and on April 24th the Battalion moved by motor 'bus to Arras and remained in the Museum cellars for the day. The next day the Essex marched to Railway Triangle and that evening took up positions in Lancer Lane and Orange Lines. No work was possible by day, but everyone was very active at night. At 11.30 p.m. on April 27th "B" Company was sent forward to reinforce the 7th

Norfolks and from that time until the evening of April 30th no communication was possible with the company commander. "C" Company were also sent to reinforce the 5th Royal Berkshires at 10 a.m. on April 28th, for it was expected that both "B" and "C" Companies would assist the Norfolks and Berkshires in an advance, but eventually the operation was cancelled.

STRUGGLE FOR RIFLE TRENCH.

April 29th passed quietly. On the following day, however, the Battalion was ordered to capture the portion of Rifle Trench still held by the enemy. "B" Company, at that time with the 7th Norfolks, were in Rifle Trench, with their left on Harness Lane, whilst "C," with the Berkshires, were in the same trench, with their right on the bomb stop which separated the British from the German portion of Rifle Trench. It was consequently decided that the remaining companies, "A" and "D," in Brigade reserve in Lancer Lane, should make a frontal attack from the assembly trench, afterwards called Musket Trench, and endeavour to occupy the German portion of Rifle Trench, connecting up with "B" Company on the right and "C" Company on the left. These companies co-operated by means of bombing demonstrations, and Stokes mortars were also used with great effect, causing the enemy much uneasiness for his flanks. Captain R. D. Hickson, M.C., was in charge of the attack and he got his men into the assembly trench by 11 p.m. He then proceeded to reconnoitre the ground and personally arranged with "C" Company to light a flare at 8 a.m. to show exactly where the bomb stop was as a direction to his left flank. Lieut. J. D. Mathews, commanding "A" Company, on the right, also reconnoitred his front and took his direction by Harness Lane. The assaulting companies were in position in the open, apparently unseen by the enemy, and as soon as the Stokes mortars ceased firing, the trench was entered almost without casualty. It was found to be much damaged in places and a number of men passed over in the darkness without realizing that their objective was reached. A large number of dead Germans were found in the trench and only eight prisoners were taken alive. Consolidation immediately began and Captain Hickson went to "C" Company on the left, where arrangements had been made to establish telephone communication with Battalion headquarters. He had barely reached the spot, when a shell hit the trench and he received serious wounds, from which he afterwards died. Two officers of "C" Company (2nd Lieuts. Osborn and Martin) were also wounded. Several other shells fell into the trench and severed communication between "C" and "D" Companies. Meanwhile, Lieut. J. D. Mathews organized a bombing attack up the communication trench leading back to Scabbard Trench. The enemy put up a stubborn defence, outranging the Mills grenades with egg

and canister bombs and preventing an efficient bomb stop being made. Day was dawning and hostile machine gunners and snipers caused serious casualties among the men who were trench-digging, for the captured work afforded little cover. Lieut. Mathews was wounded in attempting to get over the top at the German bombers in the communication trench and lay there until recovered by an advance three days later. All the other officers were wounded, except one, in each of the attacking companies. Touch had been lost with "C" Company for the reason stated above, so that no bombs could be obtained from that quarter and to get supplies from "B" Company the road had to be crossed. This road was covered by snipers and machine guns, yet 2nd Lieut. Wardall, with great gallantry, did succeed in crossing and returned with two boxes. By this time, however, all the bombs being expended and the enemy still appearing to be well supplied and in large numbers, "A" Company were being pushed out laterally. The majority joined "B" Company on the right of the road, where the enemy attack was successfully held. A number of men who had passed beyond the objective also managed to get back to this portion of the trench, where they had to remain till dark, as there was no communication by daylight. The Battalion commander (Captain Green), with 2nd Lieut. J. C. H. Hill and several orderlies, endeavoured to reach this portion of Rifle Trench. Three of the party, including Lieut. Hill, mortally, were hit about fifty yards short of the objective. Captain Green reached 7th Norfolk headquarters and was able to get into telephone communication with Captain Godin, commanding "B" Company, and gave orders as to the movement after dark of the remains of "A" and "D" Companies, who were in his trench. He could not get into communication with "C" Company on the left until late in the day, when he found that, although somewhat disorganized by Captain Hickson's untimely death, they had maintained their former position. The enemy suffered heavy losses, but so did the 9th Essex, for the casualties included five officers (Captain Reginald Davies Hickson, 2nd Lieuts. Albert Derbyshire, Jeremiah Charles Holmes Hill, Ronald John Savill and William Yardley) and 40 other ranks killed and three officers and 91 other ranks wounded. Savill and Yardley had only joined the Battalion on April 16th. Drafts reporting during April numbered 199 other ranks.

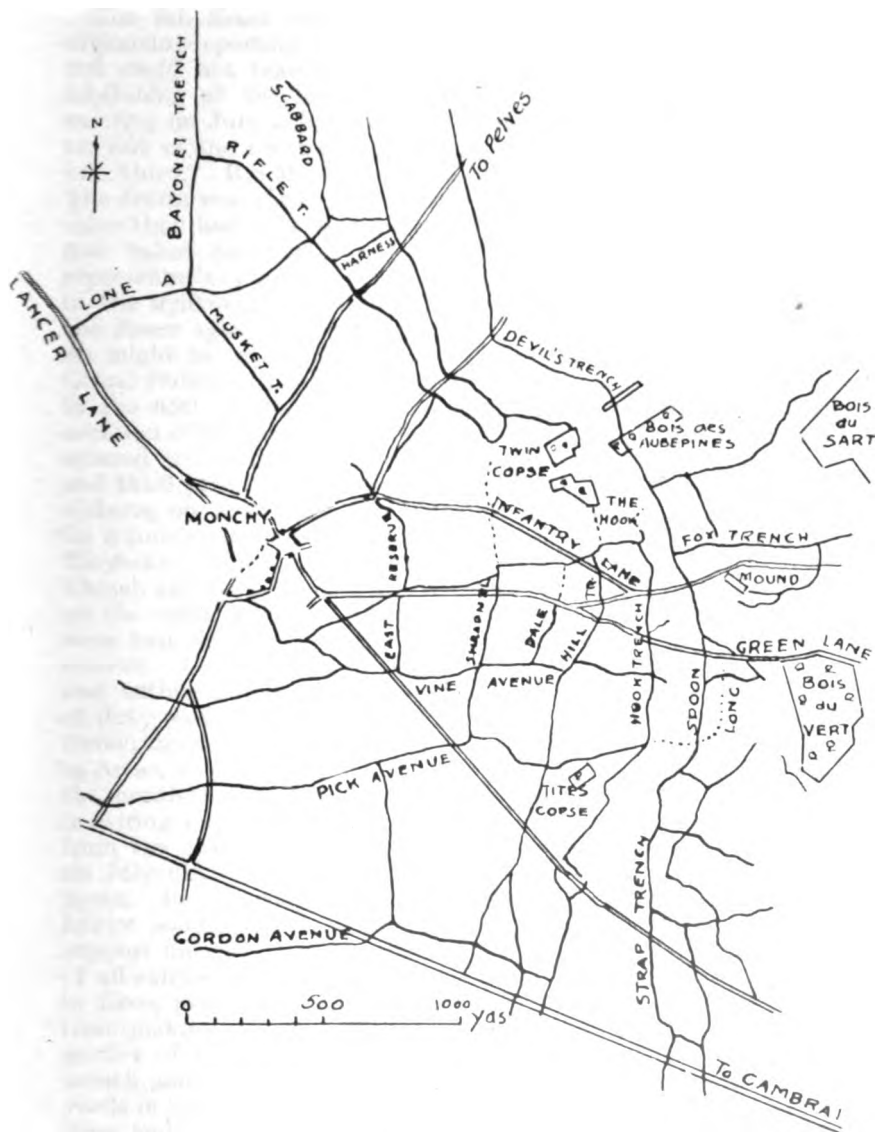
Cleaning up and refitting occupied the early days of May, but early on the 3rd the Battalion moved up again to the neighbourhood of Lancer Lane, where large parties were employed in digging. The 35th Brigade was relieved by the 37th and so the 9th Essex were back at Railway Triangle on May 10th. They were up on the Orange Line again three days later, supplying detachments to serve as carrying parties under the R.E. When the Battalion was in Arras again, on May 18th, the

Medical Officer found the men suffering much from septic sores and foot troubles and when the Essex reached Liencourt special efforts were made to make the men fit again. The Divisional Commander praised the work of the Brigade at an inspection on May 23rd, when he distributed medal ribbons to those who had distinguished themselves in the recent fighting. How much better the Battalion was in health was evident when it marched to billets at Sombrin, on May 24th, for no men fell out, although it was a very hot day. The weather was glorious and the stay at Sombrin proved delightful. At this time Lieut.-Colonel F. V. Thompson, D.S.O., took over command of the Battalion. During the month ten other ranks were killed or died of wounds and 51 were wounded, whilst eight officers and 108 other ranks joined for duty.

From June to October—all the time that the Battles of Ypres, 1916, were being waged—the 12th Division was engaged in holding the line east of Monchy-le-Preux against counter-attacks, raiding the enemy system or in consolidating the position. The improvements carried out were most marked. "Water was laid on to within 800 yards of the front line, battalion headquarters were lit by electricity, dug-outs were commodious and in plenty, kitchens were forward in the reserve line and communication trenches were deep and well boarded." Efforts to increase the comfort of officers and men were mingled with strenuous fighting, for the enemy were also active. The Division took over responsibility for the Monchy sector on May 19th-20th. The ruins of the village were still untenable from incessant hostile shelling, and some of our own dead cavalry horses still lay in the village, where they had been killed in the attack of April 10th. Even more uncomfortable was the front line, part of which was in the air. Another trouble was that Twin Copse, to the east of Monchy, was very boggy ground, impregnated with springs, which made it impossible to maintain trenches and dug-outs and thus join the system with that on the north. As a consequence, lateral communication had to be provided by means of East Reserve Trench, in which footboards were placed on piles and the water level was kept down by constant pumping. An attempt to improve the situation of Long Trench by means of a surprise attack, on July 4th, by the 7th Royal Sussex, failed because of the brightness of the night, and a projected raid by the 6th Buffs in the early morning of July 11th did not materialize because of a German counter-attack on Long and Hook trenches, the brunt of which was borne by the Buffs and the 9th Essex. The enemy succeeded in entering Long Trench, from which they were ejected on July 17th by the 6th Queen's, 6th Royal West Kents and 9th Essex, the Royal West Kents doing particularly well. Long Trench was, however, difficult to hold and it was decided to fill it with wire and abandon it, consolidating upon a line of shell-holes, to be known as Spoon

Trench, for the position was in a valley. When the Germans seized the remnants of Long and Spoon Trenches on July 25th they were allowed to retain them—"the Division was heartily glad to be rid of them, as they were only a source of weakness unless the whole line was to be advanced." As a change to trench raiding, there was a ceremonial parade in Arras on July 12th, when Major-General Scott handed over to the Mayor, as representing the city, several German guns which had been captured at the Battle of Arras, including four which had fallen to the valour of the Division.

Raid and counter raid went on during August and to assist the training of the troops in these enterprises ground was prepared at Beaurains, in which the raiding parties were exercised. Particular attention was paid to physical and bayonet exercises and the whole of the detail of the raid was studied upon a carefully prepared model, made to a scale of 1-100. On August 2nd the Germans made three vain attempts against Hook Trench, held by the 7th Norfolks and 6th Royal West Kents, and there was retaliation on August 9th, when a large scale raid by parties of 7th Suffolks, 7th East Surreys and 6th Buffs obtained considerable success in a belt of the enemy's trenches, 2,000 yards long by 800 yards deep, under cover of a skilful artillery barrage. A surprise raid by 9th Royal Fusiliers on September 2nd also had important results, while another by "C" Company, 9th Essex, under Captain Brown, on September 22nd, on a part of Spoon Trench, north of Infantry Lane, produced five German prisoners in the space of five minutes, for which both Army and Corps commanders wired their congratulations. At the end of September Brigadier-General A. B. Incedon Webber, Royal Fusiliers, succeeded Brigadier-General A. B. E. Cator in command of the 37th Brigade. The latter had left to take command of the 58th Division. Brigadier-General Incedon Webber, after the war, commanded the 1st Battalion The Essex Regiment. The Passchendaele casualties prevented the Division receiving its necessary quota of reinforcements and the strength of units was in some instances very weak when October came along. Before the Division left Arras, however, another great raid was carried out in which the 37th and 35th Brigades took part. The results were again good, though, as in the case of most of the other raids, a considerable number of the assailants were afterwards returned as wounded and missing. On October 19th the Division was transferred to the Le Cauroy area, having a farewell message from the commander of XVII Corps (Fergusson), in which he paid tribute to the fine soldierly spirit of all ranks—"whether in attack or defence, the Division has done uniformly well and has shown qualities of tenacity and determination which have been an example to all." Major-General Scott reminded the Division that they had held an important portion of the line for eighteen weeks continuously—no small achievement.



MONCHY-LE-PREUX, showing Lancer Lane and Rifle Trench to the North.

WHAT HAPPENED AT HOOK TRENCH.

The 9th Essex were at Sombrin on June 1st, training and organizing sporting events. A boxing contest fixed for June 3rd could not take place owing to all but two of the entries scratching at the last moment. There was a Brigade sports meeting on June 5th, at which the Battalion took no fewer than ten out of the nineteen events, in addition to five seconds and one third. R.S.M. Waters was a most successful competitor. The drums won the band competition, this being the first occasion since they had been formed, less than a year ago, in which they had taken part in a public contest. The Battalion boxing representatives won the middle weights and secured second place in the lightweights. At the Brigade horse show, on June 7th, the Essex again did well, taking six firsts, among other awards. As might be expected, when the Divisional sports were held at Grand Bullecourt, on June 8th, the Battalion was well represented in the 35th Brigade, which achieved many successes. On the occasion of the divisional horse show, on June 15th, the 9th Essex secured first prize for limber turn-out, second prize for cooks and third prize for mess cart. Following a distribution of medal ribbons, on June 17th, the Battalion marched to Arras, halting for a time in Beaumetz Wood, and was later billeted in Schramm Barracks. When the Essex went into the line at Bayonet Trench and Long Trench, on June 18th, they had the 7th Suffolks on the right and the London Rifle Brigade on the left. There were two companies in front, one in support and the fourth in reserve. Long Trench was little more than a line of shell holes and within a dozen yards of the German outposts. This tour of duty was without much incident, the chief occupation being trench digging. On June 28th the Battalion marched to billets in Arras, where headquarters were at the Hotel Universe. During the month three other ranks were killed and 21 wounded. Training in wiring and in scouting proceeded busily, whilst as a change from the customary sports regimental aquatic sports were held on July 6th. The next day the Essex went into the front line again. In the early morning of July 11th the enemy opened a heavy bombardment with trench mortars upon the front and support lines and fifteen minutes later they put down a barrage of all calibres, under cover of which they attacked Long Trench in force, preceded by a "fish tail" bombardment, at the same time making a demonstration against Hook Trench. Working parties of the Battalion had been out that night digging the trench and connecting it with the front line. It was some 300 yards in front of Monchy and was being prepared so that a much drier and more tenable position could be held. Before daylight the working parties returned, with the exception of No. 12 platoon, "C" Company, which was left to hold the unfinished section or northern end of the trench, with outposts between that point and the "Hook" of Hook Trench. About 5.30 a.m. the German

bombardment opened, followed by an attack in force. On the right the 6th Buffs were preparing for a raid, so that the enemy effort was met and held. The move out on the left came against the forward posts held by No. 12 platoon, one section of which was either killed or wounded, including the officer, 2nd Lieut. Clark. The remainder of the platoon took position in a small unfinished slip trench, about 100 yards in front of the regular front line. Lance-Corporal Mobbs did brilliant work in stopping the hostile advance, lying on the parapet with his Lewis gun and firing until it jammed. Whilst trying to put it right he was shot through the head and killed. When the enemy were within forty yards of the position the party made an effort to regain the front line, but only two were successful, Sergeant Saward and Private Turner, the remainder being shot down as they left the trench. The artillery and machine guns stopped the advance when within thirty yards of the slip trench. The enemy then tried to get forward by bombing up Long Trench, but a fire screen of ration bags was made at all junctions of the trench with the slip trench, and there Private W. H. Prior and Private H. Savill held them at bay, assisted by Privates Pitcher and Priestley. Savill handed loaded rifles up to Prior and in this way over a hundred rounds were fired. This plucky stand held up the enemy for a time. About 11 a.m., however, with ammunition and bombs almost exhausted, the remnant fell back about twenty yards to a strong point occupied by Lance-Corporal Wall, holding a bomb stop on the way. With this welcome reinforcement, Wall, although wounded, held on to his position all day, notwithstanding several determined attacks, and when darkness came he was able to safely withdraw the survivors of his party. 2nd Lieut. Capper, Corporal Perry and seven men made an equally plucky defence of another post. Those of the assailants who were able to enter "Hook" of Hook Trench were counter-attacked and expelled. The enemy onset was assisted by the fact that there was no wire out beyond that which was rolled over the parapet, due to the fact that there were only a hundred yards between the two front lines and that the ground was swept by rifle and machine gun-fire. The Germans retained a hold on Long Trench to within eighty yards of its junction with Hook and a line of shell holes half-way between Long and Hook trenches. An effort was made, some days later, to eject them. Captain Barltrop's most painful recollection of the hostile attack was the lack of artillery support, probably due to the smoke of the German bombardment obscuring the S.O.S. signals. "C" Company had a platoon in the northern end of Long Trench (next to the 6th Buffs) and some outposts in the shell holes between the loose end of Long Trench and the "Hook" of Hook Trench. "As a matter of fact, I had been personally responsible for selecting these posts, having been on the work for the three nights preceding the attack. One at

least of the posts bore evidence of recent use by the enemy, probably having been occupied by him at night. Our object was to link up the posts by trenches and to run a communication trench to the Hook. We suffered heavy casualties in the bombardment and have to thank our rifle and Lewis gun-fire for the fact that Hook held out. 2nd Lieut. Clark, who commanded the platoon of "C" Company in Long Trench, was wounded and taken prisoner. He subsequently lost his leg. Our line on his right had been thinned for the projected attack by the Buffs, which was anticipated by that of the Germans." No. 12 platoon lost 21 out of a total of 42 of all ranks.

On the night of July 11th the Battalion was relieved and moved to Feuchy-Wancourt line, but on the night of the 14th the Essex took the place of the 5th Royal Berkshires in the right sub-sector, which stretched from Vine Lane to Infantry Lane, in readiness for the attempt to retake Long Trench in the early morning of July 15th. Owing to delay, the relief took longer than expected and the attack was postponed, as a consequence of which the 9th Essex returned to the Feuchy-Wancourt line. The Battalion was again moved up on the night of July 16th and on the morning of the 17th, with the 6th Queen's and 6th Royal West Kents, on their right, the Essex men delivered the counter-attack. The South Country battalions entered their objective in Long Trench and held on with varying fortune until the arrival of reinforcements at night enabled the enterprise to be completely accomplished. The 9th Essex secured their line of posts, but were enfiladed from a point in Long Trench which had not been taken and they had to retire. A party, under 2nd Lieut. Peters, M.C., in particular, fought magnificently, but the enemy were in too great strength. The Battalion held on to a series of positions which connected Long Trench with the front line. The 5th Royal Berkshires renewed the effort from the Essex front, but without material success, and the opposing lines became stabilized.

When the Battalion was relieved on July 24th by the 7th East Surreys it missed by two hours a hostile attack upon Long Trench. Enemy aircraft were also very active. The stay at Beaurains was devoted to training and the 9th Essex were vigorously employed in this way when the end of the month came. During July drafts joined to the number of 132 other ranks. Five officers (2nd-Lieuts. Frank Wesley Peters, M.C., L. R. Hodge, Leslie Walter Grosvenor Parker (6th Battalion), Ernest Scott Household (5th Battalion) and Lionel Cresswell Strange) were killed or died of wounds, one (2nd-Lieut. S. A. Clark) was missing, four were wounded as a result of the counter-attack on July 17th, whilst of other ranks, 48 were killed or died of wounds, 104 were wounded, four were wounded and missing and 48 were missing. Most of the last-named were later reported killed. On August 1st the Battalion succeeded the 11th Middlesex in the trenches, with headquarters under the Cambrai Road, and

found the enemy in a much quieter mood. They were quickly disillusioned the next day, however, for the Germans put down such a heavy cannonade at night that the support trench of the left company was practically obliterated. It was the prelude to an attack in the early morning of August 3rd, when the enemy secured an entry between Pick Avenue and Vine Avenue. Lieut. E. R. Capper led bombing parties of the Essex and 7th Norfolks and drove their assailants south to within fifteen yards of the junction of Pick Avenue. The good work was completed by the 7th Norfolks later in the morning, when they recovered occupation of the original line. This gallant exploit was happily light in casualties, and these were mainly caused by artillery. Capper, who was awarded the M.C., was a Jew and proud of the fact. A brother officer recalls that his business instincts never deserted him. When he had recaptured this portion of the trench and handed it over to another unit, he insisted upon having a receipt for so many yards of trench before he would return to his battalion. Later in the year, shortly before he fell, most gallantly holding up an enemy counter-attack, he was asked for some coils of wire, which he readily handed over. For some time, however, his face wore a thoughtful expression and eventually he said, "I can't let something go for nothing. It's in my blood to bargain. Let me have some of your spare trench boards." And the whim was humoured. Quieter days followed the trench fighting on August 3rd, enemy sniping being kept under by the sentries, who were able to observe without the use of periscopes. On August 4th the Battalion went back to the Brown Line and then, on August 12th, to another reserve position in the Wancourt-Feuchy area, from Sword Lane northwards. Here, on August 15th, a serious bombing accident deprived the Battalion of two officers and eight other ranks, of whom the two officers (Major Edwin Baskerville Hickox, M.C., and Lieut. Frederick Elliott Brasted, 7th Battalion) and two other ranks died of their injuries. The Battalion went into the left sub-sector of the Monchy sector on August 18th and came out again six days later and went into its well-known haunt in the Wancourt-Feuchy line, after which it was in billets in Achicourt. During the month no fewer than 19 officers joined for duty, with 264 other ranks. The casualties, including the accident mentioned above, comprised two officers and nine other ranks killed and 35 other ranks wounded.

PRAISED FOR A RAID ON SPOON TRENCH.

On September 5th the Battalion marched to Bois des Bœufs and, six days later, was again doing duty in the Monchy sector, suffering enemy shelling at intervals. Lieut. John Ernest Dale died of wounds on September 14th. The Essex succeeded the 5th Royal Berkshires in the front line in the daylight of September 17th, with the exception of two posts, H sap and Twin

Copse, which were not approachable by day. A raiding party of 88 of the 96th I.R. attempted to surprise the right company on September 20th, but did not succeed. They made another effort at 4.30 a.m. on September 22nd. This time the 163rd I.R. supplied the personnel, but again they were stopped well before the Essex wire was reached. At 2.30 p.m. the same day Captain Brown, with seventy of the 9th, retaliated against Spoon Trench north of Infantry Lane, covered by a box barrage. In twenty seconds the German trench was entered. Eighteen Germans were killed and five were brought back as prisoners; all within five minutes of the start of the enterprise—a most successful feat of arms. The only casualty was one man wounded. The Corps commander wired congratulations, “A plucky raid which reflects great credit on them, carried out with dash.” The Army commander was equally pleased, for he termed it “an operation which exemplifies dash and originality. A most praiseworthy enterprise and all ranks to be commended.” The next day (September 23rd) the Battalion, with the rest of the 35th Brigade, went to Achicourt by train. The respite was not for long, for on the 29th the 9th Essex were in Wancourt-Feuchy line and were thus employed at the end of the month. During the month 18 other ranks were killed, 56 were wounded and one gassed. Major H. R. Bowen was transferred to 1st/2nd London Regiment as second-in-command and four officers were attached to the 1st Bucks. Three officers reported for duty, together with 64 other ranks.

LIEUT.-COLONEL F. V. THOMPSON KILLED.

Large carrying parties were provided during the early part of October and on October 5th the Essex were again sent to the Monchy sector, where what were described as “quiet days” were spent. Unhappily, however, the Battalion suffered a serious loss on October 7th. The 15th Division carried out a raid that night and the enemy retorted with a heavy barrage on the Essex trenches, as a result of which Lieut.-Colonel Frederick Vivian Thompson, D.S.O., R.E., commanding the 9th Essex, died of wounds received, whilst Captain F. C. W. Brown, who was with him, was wounded. Major G. Green, M.C., had left to attend a senior officers’ course at Aldershot and Major W. Russell Johnson assumed command, with Captain N. J. Sievers as second-in-command. The bombardment lasted three-quarters of an hour and badly damaged the trenches, so that the remainder of the night was spent in preparing what cover was possible. “C” Company, of the 9th Essex, were ordered to give covering fire to the raiding party and, rightly anticipating retaliation, the line was sparsely held except for Lewis gun teams. Colonel Thompson, however, with the Company commander, came up “to see the fun,” as he put it. The British front line was too close to the enemy’s to be shelled, but the Germans used trench

mortar bombs (" pineapples ") to such effect that all the Lewis guns were knocked out. The Colonel was hit in the leg, but refused to be moved until all the other wounded had been evacuated, and he died later in hospital from blood poisoning. " He was a martinet, but a very brave and likeable man," was a brother officer's description of him. The irony of the incident lay in the fact that the officer whose duty it was to be present was the only one to escape without a scratch. A sidelight on the Colonel's personality is given by an incident which occurred in the Monchy section. He entered his own lines by jumping into the front line trench from No Man's Land, although he had been told to halt by the man on the fire step. He was very angry because the man did not shoot when he received no answer to his challenge, " Who goes there ? " Wet weather ensued and made conditions most unpleasant. Two patrols, under 2nd Lieut. H. Wardall and 2nd Lieut. H. A. Browett, obtained much useful information on October 10th, and a word of cordial praise from the brigadier. The next day the Battalion moved into the Monchy defences, where excellent trenches, boarded throughout, made a great and welcome change. There was not much to note beyond occasional shelling. The well-known Wancourt-Feuchy line was occupied on October 17th and then on the 21st a change of scene was provided in a return to Schramm Barracks, Arras, when Lieut.-Colonel H. M. de Sales La Terriere, M.C., took command and Major Russell Johnson became second-in-command. The 35th Brigade began to move back into the training areas and at Panquetin, on October 23rd, the Battalion was inspected whilst on the march by the G.O.C. 12th Division, who expressed satisfaction with the discipline. The 9th Essex marched to Rebreuviette on October 28th and the next day to billets at Conchy-sur-Canche, " D " Company being housed in the adjacent hamlet of Monchel and " B " Company in Boubers-sur-Canche. The month's casualties were comparatively light, one officer had been killed and one wounded, whilst nine other ranks were killed or died of wounds and nine were wounded. Training, interspersed with football matches, was the order for the early days of November, after which the Battalion left for Blangy-sur-Ternoise on November 5th for practice in co-operation with tanks and returned again to Conchy two days later. The Brigade assault-at-arms took place at Vaulx on November 12th, when the 9th Essex won two first and two second prizes, including first award for the best platoon, won by No. 11, under 2nd Lieut. R. S. Stanley. The Battalion marched to Frévent on November 16th and entrained for Péronne, afterwards being billeted at Haut Allaines for the night. The following night was spent at Fins and the following day Peziere was reached, the commanding officer and company and platoon commanders having left to reconnoitre the tank assembly position for the forthcoming

operations. The Essex were to take part in a bold enterprise which at one time seemed likely to achieve sensational success. The result, however, was not so satisfactory, but the Battle of Cambrai, as it is known, will be remembered for all time in the British Army, because of the skill and dash which succeeded in forcing the enemy out of a strong position and which nearly carried the troops into Cambrai.



THE DASH AT CAMBRAI.

What the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Douglas Haig) described as "the Cambrai Operations" constituted a brilliant feat of arms. The initial attack struck the depleted enemy forces in the Cambrai sector as the Battles of Ypres, 1917, were dying down and succeeded in penetrating deeply into their line. The Germans later launched a counter-attack which recovered a large section of the ground, but the advance undoubtedly had an invigorating effect upon the British Army and also afforded material support to the Italians, then being pressed back to the Piave. The arrangement was that Sir Julian Byng's force was to attack without prior artillery preparation, but to depend upon a great mass of tanks to smash through the enemy wire and thus make a passage for the infantry. Accordingly, at 6.20 a.m. on November 20th, 1917, the thrust was delivered upon a six miles front from a point east of Gonnellieu to the Canal du Nord opposite Hermies, with the support of smoke and gas attacks on the right and a subsidiary infantry advance on the left east of Epehy and between Bullecourt and Fontaines-Croisilles. If a sufficiently extensive gap were torn in the enemy line, it was hoped that the warfare would develop a sufficiently open character for cavalry to pass through, but the results did not accord fully with expectation, though a squadron of Canadian cavalry performed a notable break through to the right of Masnieres. The infantry onset was, on the whole, so successful, however, that at the end of the day three German systems of defence had been broken through to an average depth of four and a half miles, and 5,000 prisoners were captured. The advance was continued next day, particularly on the left, so that at the end of the period of 48 hours during which it was calculated the enemy would be unable to collect sufficient troops to effectively counter-attack Byng's force had made a deep indentation in the enemy's line and were seriously threatening Cambrai. The garrisons of Bourlon Wood and village obstinately held out, however, and some days were spent, with varying success, in dislodging them. When finally Bourlon Wood and Hill were in our possession, the ground gained was not sufficient to remove the sense of insecurity which was felt in this quarter. A counter-attack was observed to be preparation and it came headlong at 7 a.m. on November 30th from several directions, but mainly from Masnieres to Banteux. The advance on the right seriously threatened the salient at one time and it was only stout fighting that enabled the troops to be withdrawn without more substantial losses. The struggle continued until December 6th, when it died down once more. The enemy had been able to occupy a section of the line round Vendhuile and Gonnellieu. They regained Bourlon Wood, Marcoing, Masnieres and other important

tactical points, but they were unable to wrest from British control over 12,000 yards of their old front line from La Vacquerie to a point opposite Boursies, together with between 10,000 and 11,000 yards of the Hindenburg Line and Hindenburg Reserve Line and the villages of Ribecourt, Flesquieres and Havrincourt.

The 12th Division took a prominent part in the Cambrai advance and also in resisting the counter-attack, suffering, indeed, very severely from the subsequent German thrust at Villers-Guislain. All ranks were assiduously trained in the Hesdin area to co-operate with tanks, and on November 13th Sir Douglas Haig was present at a rehearsal of an attack by the 6th Buffs and 7th East Surreys. Shortly afterwards the Division proceeded south to join the III Corps (Pulteney). There, on November 18th, it took over from the 20th Division, the movement being made with the greatest secrecy and in the hours of darkness. Four days before the attack was timed to start, fires were restricted to one per platoon and none were permitted at night. Placed on the right of the attack the III Corps had the 12th Division on the extreme flank, the 20th in the centre and the 6th on the left, with the 29th Division held in hand to pass through the other divisions and capture the Masnieres-Rumilly-Marcoing line. No fewer than 216 tanks were apportioned to the Corps, of which 72 crawled ahead of the 12th Division. The latter's leading brigades were the 35th and 86th and they had as the first phase to take the German outpost system and the trenches, together with Sonnet Farm. Thereafter further companies were to pass through and take about 1,500 yards of the Hindenburg Line—called the Blue Line—representing an advance of a little over a mile. Then, after a pause, the 37th Brigade and the 11th Middlesex were to take the Brown Line, which entailed a forward move for another 2,000 yards, with as prizes a portion of the Hindenburg Support Line and strong points at Bleak House, Bonavis, Pain Pain, Le Quennet and Lateau Wood. As the advance progressed a flank was to be established facing south-east and in contact with the 55th Division on the right. The assembly positions were fixed at such a distance as to preclude the noise of the tanks reaching the enemy. The infantry had a trying march across country of some 6,000 to 8,000 yards, marked by tape. All was then ready for the advance, which started at 6.20 a.m. on November 20th, with the roar of British guns along the whole line. Ten minutes later the tanks commenced to amble at the leisurely rate of fifty yards per minute, followed by the infantry under protection of the barrage and numerous aeroplanes. The 35th Brigade had the 5th Royal Berkshires on the right and 9th Essex (La Terriere) on the left. Each Battalion was accompanied by a dozen tanks, but unfortunately nearly half of them broke down or stuck in a sunken lane leading from Gonnellieu to Banteux. The intermediate objective (the

Black Line) was, however, quickly gained and then the 7th Suffolks, with a company of the 7th Norfolks, went through and took their allotted portion of the Hindenburg Line and thus completed the task of the 35th Brigade. The 36th Brigade was similarly successful and took Sonnet Farm. The 37th Brigade, after an interval of 48 minutes, passed through and had severe fighting before they captured the Brown Line. The prizes included Lateau Wood and Bonavis Ridge, which Sir Julian Byng deemed one of the finest achievements of that great day. The Division's casualties were comparatively light, being no more than 144 killed, 864 wounded and 160 missing. Meanwhile, Masnieres had been released by the German retirement and along the Cambrai road trooped hundreds of the residents joyously singing the "Marseillaise." The 12th Division was occupied in consolidating the position during the next few days and improving the line by means of local attacks.

Reviewing the position at that date, an Essex officer wrote : A splendidly planned and executed advance had been brought to a standstill by an unexpected obstacle to both tanks and cavalry. The deep and steep-sided canal delayed us long enough to give the enemy time to bring up his reserves. The result was a long and narrow salient, and since no further troops were available, either to continue the advance by a freshly prepared attack or to widen the sides of the salient, the position, if it remained for long, would inevitably become, not, as the Higher Command apparently liked to think, a wedge driven into the enemy line, but, like Ypres, merely a death trap, and, if not strengthened on the flanks, liable to be completely cut off. Rightly or wrongly, it had always been the British policy to refuse to give up a yard of ground until completely driven off it. It was, therefore, urgently necessary to strongly defend this position to enable us to stop there. The weakest point was the extreme right flank. Not only had the bulk of the attacking force pushed on to the front, but the rear flanks had not been filled up by reinforcements, and, to make it worse, across the base of the salient ran three double lines of well-made trenches, running N.W. to S.E., namely, our old front line, the Hindenburg outpost line (Bleak) and the Hindenburg main line. The 41st Brigade, which had captured this sector, advancing N.W., then had to face N.E. and E., and make a defensive line by joining up these three trench systems either by digging a new line or by converting the few communication trenches into fire trenches. On the right the 55th Division were already defending a very long and consequently lightly held line. The Berkshires, our right battalion, had to dig a new front line and connect up with the Norfolks in the Hindenburg main line. The Norfolks had to convert short lengths of communication trenches into fire trenches, regardless of whether a proper field of fire was obtainable, and the Essex, in rear and immediate support, had to convert a long

communication trench, approachable only from the flank, into a line of defence covering the valley behind the Berkshires. It was obvious that once the Berkshires' line was pierced, the Essex position would become the main defensive line. The Suffolks were in brigade reserve to the south, and on the right flank of the position, while Brigade Headquarters and, consequently, our line of communication, was still further to the flank. It is easy to be wise after the event, but I do not think anyone had foreseen that once our weak front lines were pierced, the enemy was immediately made a present of three magnificent lines of communication trenches, built by himself, leading right into the heart of the salient, and the fact that he made so little use of his gift does him no credit. Every trench was heavily wired, mostly on both sides. All the original German wire, untouched by bombardment, had been left standing, and large quantities of new wire had been put out by the 41st Brigade. This should be noted owing to its bearing on later events. The 9th Essex, together with the rest of the Brigade, had not only attacked and captured the position, but had been kept in the line several days working very hard, not only at consolidating its own line, but, as is usual with support battalions, carrying for the rest of the brigade. Its strength was between 300 and 400 men. This latter fact is both interesting and important, in view of the fact that when an enquiry was held several months later it was stated that it was understood the battalions were at full strength. For several days aeroplane reports which were sent up to battalion headquarters showed more and more batteries on the hills behind Banteux, and every day single guns would register from some new and unexpected spot. It was then quite obvious that the expected German counter-attack was coming and that we were to be part of its objective. We should either have been relieved or reinforced. Neither of these alternatives materialized.

THE COUNTER-ATTACK.

Towards the close of November considerable movement of German troops was noticed and Villers-Guislain was recognized as the danger spot on the right. The 12th Division was responsible for a front of 4,800 yards, which extended from 800 yards north of Turner Quarry to Lateau Wood inclusive. The 35th Brigade (5th Royal Berkshires and 7th Norfolks) was on the right, with 9th Essex in support and 7th Suffolks in reserve in the old British front line between Cheshire Quarry and Newton Post. At 7.30 a.m. on November 30th the Berkshires were driven back to Adam Trench, but they counter-attacked with bombs and drove the enemy into Quarry Post. The latter were in overwhelming force, and the supply of bombs failing, the Berkshires withdrew again to Adam Trench, where further hostile advance was stopped for the time being by a block. The German offensive was filtering through on both sides and the battalion fell back

upon Bleak and Bleak support trenches, where the 9th Essex were stationed. The line was in peril. German troops were seen to be in occupation of Guislain, Gonnellieu and Gouzeaucourt and, consequently, Essex and Berkshires went farther back at midday to La Vacquerie, where they held on to the cemetery and the ridge. Meanwhile, on the left, the 7th Norfolks were also heavily attacked and pressed back, with the 9th Royal Fusiliers (36th Brigade), towards the Cambrai road. The Norfolks suffered so severely that only one officer remained standing and the remnants of the battalion were incorporated with the Fusiliers. The 9th Essex, on Gonnellieu Ridge, were aware of the critical situation from men of the 7th Suffolks who had escaped from the Germans. This battalion had been surprised whilst in reserve at Cheshire Quarry and was practically destroyed. The Essex sent a platoon to reinforce the Norfolks and at 9.30 a.m. was itself heavily engaged with the enemy, who were endeavouring to work round the left flank. As a result the Essex withdrew with the Berkshires, as stated above, to La Vacquerie, where the 9th were attached to the 61st Brigade of the 20th Division. The 36th Brigade in the centre had varying fortune. It was forced over Bonavis Ridge, but by a brilliant counter-attack recovered the ridge, led by Lieut.-Colonel Elliott Cooper, of the 8th Royal Fusiliers, who, though taken prisoner, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his valour. The German pressure was tremendous in this quarter and the Brigade headquarters were ultimately removed to Villers Plouich. The 37th Brigade, in the northern sector, suffered severely, too, whilst covering Bonavis Ridge and Lateau Wood and were pushed back to the Hindenburg Line. The divisional artillery also felt the effect of this push and many gallant deeds were performed, one of which stopped the enemy advance over the Cambrai road. It gained Lieut. Wallace the Victoria Cross and five of his men the Distinguished Conduct Medal. During this heavy fighting the headquarters of the 35th Brigade had suffered early and suffered heavily. The enemy overran the Villers Guislain sector and were very quickly in that town. The alarm posts were manned at once, but the Germans were upon them. Captain Sievers, 9th Essex, and several of the personnel were killed. The Brigade-Major (Captain Broadwood) was taken prisoner when returning to the Brigade dug-out to destroy papers, and the two clerks with him were killed. General Vincent, the Brigade commander, with the 69th Field Company, R.E., and remnant of his staff, withdrew to a small rise 200 yards away, where they were attacked by aeroplanes and withdrew to Gauche Wood. There were then only three or four survivors, but details were scraped together until 100 men were collected and formed into four platoons. These were employed in preventing the enemy emerging from the wood, and though they had to move to the railway embankment, another 100 yards away, to escape aeroplane

activity, they pluckily held up the enemy advance from the south side of the wood. "It was really a marvel," recalled Sergeant Pritchard, "that the whole Brigade was not destroyed here. Owing to the suddenness of the enemy attack the disorganization of units was beyond description. I found myself next to an artilleryman manning a trench at night with a body of mixed troops from everywhere. The Orderly Room Corporal (Holden) was captured and only just had time to throw important papers into an adjacent pond. Captain G. A. L. Graham, the Adjutant, was of extraordinary assistance during these troublesome days. It was nothing to see teams of transport at full gallop out of the salient and it was wonderful that we escaped as we did. Gunners harnessed their teams and retired sufficient distance only to turn and load the gun, then fire and gallop off again. Others were destroyed and many forward guns were lost." Hostile battalions could be seen advancing upon Gouzeaucourt, and, to escape being cut off, General Vincent retired to Revelon Ridge, where he met the 11th Middlesex. This battalion, with the 6th Queen's, was at Heudicourt when the attack began. Both units had been sent forward to the support of the 35th Brigade—the Queen's to Vaucelette Farm and the Middlesex to the Revelon-Gouzeaucourt road, and the prompt despatch of these fresh battalions undoubtedly assisted to deny the further advance of the enemy at this critical juncture. The Middlesex afterwards supported the attack of the Guards Division upon Gouzeaucourt. General Vincent established his line from Vaucelette Farm along Irwine Lane, with a support line through Chapel Lane and along Revelon Ridge, and then due north to the west of Gouzeaucourt. This was held by all sorts of units—cyclists, machine gunners, engineers, cavalry, bandsmen, pioneers and others. There was not much more fighting for the 12th Division. The 9th Essex, whilst attached to the 61st Brigade, and occupying Foster Lane, covering the Gouzeaucourt road, were attacked on December 1st, and turned out an enemy party which had obtained a footing. There was further fighting for the 36th Brigade, but it was not of a decisive character. Relief was at hand and on the night of 3rd-4th December there was an assembly at Heudicourt *en route* for Aire. The Division lost 164 officers and 3,362 other ranks in the November 30th struggle, approximating 50 per cent. of its strength, but it had the satisfaction of receiving the hearty congratulations of Sir Julian Byng, who said that throughout the 12th had lived up to its splendid reputation, whilst Major-General Scott told the Division that he was justly proud of the fighting spirit which it had displayed.

PART PLAYED BY THE 9th ESSEX.

The detailed story of the adventures of the 9th Essex at that time makes very interesting reading. The Battalion was accompanied in the initial advance on November 20th by twelve

tanks (a Tank Company). The four companies were in the front wave, whilst headquarters, one section of the 35th M.G. Company and one Stokes mortar formed a second wave. The company commanders were Capper, Barltrop, Whalley and Govas. On the right were the 5th Royal Berkshires and on the left the Royal Sussex, whilst in the rear were the 7th Suffolks, who were to pass through the Battalion in due course and take a further objective. Behind the 35th Brigade was the 37th Brigade. The objective of the Essex was two lines of trenches in front of the Hindenburg Line known as Bleak Trench and Barrack Support. The Battalion marched with the greatest precaution from Peizieres and, by 2 a.m., had formed up in the rear of the tanks, which were a thousand yards behind the British front line. At 6 a.m. the tanks started their engines, the noise creating misgivings among the assembled troops. When the tanks moved off ten minutes later the artillery put down a heavy barrage on all the enemy trenches and battery positions. The tanks quickly met with misfortune. All those attached to "A" Company, one of "C" Company's and two of "B" Company's stuck either in the British front line trenches or in a sunken road. The company commanders, however, had their men well in hand and with the utmost coolness led them forward through the gaps. The objectives were reached and the positions consolidated, "A" Company (Capper) performing their task well under very difficult conditions. A number of Germans were killed or captured and, in addition, the Battalion secured as trophies a considerable supply of all kinds of munitions and stores, including a heavy mortar, two medium, three heavy and two light machine guns and several granatenwerfer. There was no immediate counter-attack and the Essex very quickly settled down in their new positions, constructing a couple of strong points, which were of considerable importance to them a few days later. "One incident always sticks," wrote an officer. "I saw one German pushing another wounded man in a wheelbarrow for two hundred yards along a duckboard track. He was running with it, but turned back and waved. The man paid for his temerity, for he was brought down, but fortunately was only slightly wounded. Another was that of seeing Lieut.-Colonel La Terriere in Tommy's uniform complete, arriving in the second wave with his rifle and bayonet 'at the carry.'" For the next nine days consolidation continued, wiring and trench improvements being vigorously carried on. The enemy shelled various parts of the line intermittently by day, but did little damage and the nights were quiet. The weather conditions were execrable and the trenches were almost impassable in places. With the help of the R.E., drainage was improvised and thereafter trench routine was normal. A counter-attack was known to be in preparation and all possible precautions were taken. At 7 a.m. on November 30th the storm burst with the utmost fury. A hostile cannonade smote the



LIEUT.-COLONEL H. M. DE SALES LA TERRIERE, M.C.

trench system of the 35th Brigade, gas shells being intermixed with high explosive. The line held by the 9th Essex was luckily untouched, but the sectors on either side suffered severely. At 7.30 a.m. men from both flank battalions were seen coming down Bleak Trench and from the Hindenburg Line and when the barrage lifted clear the Germans were observed coming over from these directions in large numbers. They included German runners, who went across the 9th Essex front thinking that the ground had been already taken. The enemy were heavily fired upon by "B" and "C" Companies, who stayed the advance for the time being, whilst a platoon of "A" Company was sent to the left flank in response to an urgent appeal for assistance from the Norfolks. The situation was undoubtedly developing critically, particularly when headquarters of 5th Royal Berkshires arrived and reported that the Battalion had been driven in. The enemy were also seen making for Gonnellieu on the right, and messages filtered through in various ways that Villers-Guislain, Gonnellieu and Gouzeaucourt were in enemy occupation. The last-named town was nearly a mile in the Battalion's right rear. The enemy's rapid advance prevented effective artillery support and also disorganized the system of communication. The Essex had not been dislodged from their sector, but numbers of the enemy were working round on the left flank in the rear of "B" Company. The Battalion stood in grave danger of being cut off on both flanks and at 11.30 a.m.—four and a half hours after the enemy onset started—it was decided to withdraw with the remnants of the 5th Royal Berkshires by way of the old German front line and form a flank between La Vacquerie and Villers Plouich. The rearguard was in peril, for the enemy had begun to press hard, but each company withdrew coolly and without serious casualties, although Captain Capper, of "A" Company, who hung on to the last, was wounded and captured. He died a prisoner of war on December 24th following. About 2 p.m. the Battalion reached La Vacquerie and the trenches round the village were occupied, whilst the commanding officer of the Berkshires endeavoured to find the Brigade in the rear so as to obtain support. He returned at 4.30 p.m. with orders from the 36th Brigade that the old British front and support lines were to be occupied, the Essex being attached to the 61st Brigade of the 20th Division as support. All ranks were suffering severely from exhaustion consequent upon having been in the line continuously for ten days and being without food or water since the previous evening. At 6 p.m. "D" Company were sent to carry tools to the Shropshire Light Infantry and "C" Company to bring up rations. "B" Company were ordered to Foster Lane, where they got into touch with the 12th K.R.R. "A" Company occupied the old front line, with "B" Company on the right, "D" Company went into support in rear of "A" Company and "C" was in

reserve. Thus posted, the night passed quietly. The Battalion lost two well-known officers (Captain Ernest Raphael Capper, M.C., and Captain Nowell Johnstone Sievers).

"The enemy continuously shelled all communications on the night of November 30th," wrote Colonel Sales de la Terriere. "The Battalion had been actively engaged in carrying parties and got settled down into its own lines just before dawn, very tired. At this moment a short, but intense, bombardment was put down on all the Brigade trenches. When it stopped we could see from our lines a party of the enemy in the valley to our left at the junction of the main Hindenburg line and the Berkshires. These were fired at and driven into the trenches. We were not being shelled and no news was received from any other battalion until about 10 o'clock, when a message came to hand from the Norfolks asking for support. At the same time we saw a company of the enemy on the hillside, right in rear of the Norfolks and ourselves. These also were fired at and went to ground. Before attempting to send the small amount of support available to a position which appeared to have been deeply penetrated, it was vital to find out what had happened to the Berkshires. The C.O. went round personally and was astonished to meet the O.C. Berkshires, whose front line had, it transpired, been obliterated, bringing back his headquarters into the Essex lines. While discussing the position some men appeared without arms. It was a bit disconcerting to find that these were men from the Suffolks, our brigade reserve, who had been captured by the enemy some time previously and who reported that the enemy was proceeding to Brigade headquarters! A little incident shows the spirit in which the British Army fought. When men were asked rather forcibly why they didn't get hold of some rifles, they replied, 'Oh, but we've been captured.' They honestly thought that it wasn't quite playing the game to start fighting again after they had given their word to the enemy to go back down the German line! It was now obvious that the enemy was well round our right rear and left flank and we were in an extremely difficult position. If we reinforced the left, it widened the gap to the right; if we reinforced the right, it widened the gap to the left! In either case we could only advance on a one man front—to the left, up the old C.T.'s to the Hindenburg line, both of which were constructed to be, and actually were, enfiladed by the capture of the high ground; to the right, again up the old outpost front line. There was nothing to shoot at, as both the enemy and ourselves were confined to the trenches by the masses of unbroken wire! The enemy had no need to attack over the open, as he was now able to advance in strength along six lines of excellent communication trenches in the brigade sector. This completely prevented any counter-attack over the open. Moreover, our artillery had ceased firing by 10 a.m. With the remnant of the Berkshires, therefore, we decided to

remain where we were as long as possible and then move westward to La Vacquerie and endeavour to get in front of the enemy again and delay his progress across the salient. To stop indefinitely in our present position and make a last stand, with tired troops and no more ammunition available, would have been sheer waste of a fine battalion. The greater part would inevitably have been captured or killed, and there was no intention whatever of allowing that. About 11 a.m. a large enemy formation of aeroplanes came over, flying very low up and down the lines, dropping small bombs and firing machine guns, but doing no damage and giving us at least something to shoot at, though with equal apparent lack of success. Our own 'planes were engaged elsewhere, so the enemy had it all to himself. By about noon 'A' and 'C' Companies reported that they were engaged with the enemy, who were working round their flanks, and unless we were to be completely surrounded it was time to move. The order was, therefore, given to withdraw to La Vacquerie, 'A' Company being heavily engaged. The Berkshires were covered by a company lying in the open, between Bleak Trench and our old front line. The enemy by this time were pouring across their front in a southerly direction. On reaching La Vacquerie we were ordered to hold part of our old front line and part of La Vacquerie."

Recollections of that day's heavy conflict also vividly remain with Captain Barltrop, who wrote: "I have read a number of official accounts of this action and all seem to go out of their way to insist that the counter-attack was expected and all possible was done to meet it. Certainly we all expected retaliation at some time, but we had no evidence of much effort in higher quarters to meet it. I suppose the storm broke so suddenly and furiously that no warning of its actual coming could hope to be in time to be effective. In our part of the line the Royal Berkshires got the brunt of it. The 9th Essex were in support at the time and were more endangered by a threat of actual envelopment than by hostile fire. The remnants of the Berkshires, in front, fell back upon us, but our position was then so far intact that the enemy could not attack frontally; instead, he bombed both flanks and for hours the cry went up for bombs and yet more bombs. Although the offensive started at 7 a.m. we were still in position at mid-day. We were very anxious, however, for we could see parties of Germans away in our rear on both flanks; in fact, British prisoners could be discerned being marched back. Somewhere between noon and 1 p.m. we received orders both by telephone and runner to retire on Villers Plouich. Then began a really hazardous journey. We could not retire over the top or we should have been caught by fire from three sides. There was only one way, and that was by the trench, and, of course, that ran at right angles to the line of the enemy on our immediate front. The pressure upon our

rear became greater and greater. After a while "B," "C" and "D" Companies reached "A" Company's line, where the latter stood, under Captain Capper, to cover the retirement. I wanted to stay with Capper, but in his rather theatrical but brave way, he ordered me to go on. He pointed out that he was my senior and I must obey orders. That was the last I saw of him. By this time the enemy were advancing in line over the top. I heard the rifle and Lewis gun fire of Capper's men, but it did not last long, for they were caught on both flanks in the trench by the enemy. Capper fought to the last and when taken prisoner was seriously wounded, from the effects of which he died soon after in Germany. The pressure on our rear steadily increased and if we were to avoid being trapped there was nothing for some of us but to get out. This the rearmost of us did, making for a line of lateral trenches in front of La Vacquerie. Here we formed up and were at last able to send the enemy to ground. From this point orderly retirement by parties to Villers Plouich was possible. The artillery were at La Vacquerie, but all the guns except one were out of action and deserted when we arrived. The exception was served by one man, who bravely fired across open sights and incidentally assisted in checking the hostile advance. All about us at La Vacquerie were men of other units and Divisions, and a colonel (of the K.R.R., I think) told me to send out a platoon in front of the guns. Lieut. Macey was despatched accordingly, whilst I retired to get attention for a bullet wound in the wrist, for which I was subsequently invalided to England." Captain Macey also wrote that it was impossible to realize how isolated the Battalion had become by mid-day. "We were heavily shelled, but not directly attacked, although Germans were everywhere. I saw trains of their transport, artillery and, I thought, cavalry passing away to our right and disappearing some distance in the rear. The entire absence of our artillery has been explained. Before we got orders to retire, A.S.C., Labour Corps and men from all units, unarmed, kept arriving and saying they had been taken prisoners at all sorts of places in the rear and it was in these confused circumstances that we started to retire. 2nd Lieut. Barrett was holding the two strong points of 'D' Company, but the enemy captured one. Barrett, almost unaware of what was happening elsewhere, immediately led his few men forward and regained it, losing almost all of them in the process. He evacuated it almost immediately afterwards, when the Battalion moved. To retire down the communication trench with the Germans bombing in the rear and expected to make an appearance over the side produced a real feeling of alarm and when we passed 'A' Company, under wonderful Capper and C.S.M. Baker, we overflowed out of the trench. Free of the trench, we retired down the road towards Villers Plouich, with enemy aeroplanes swarming round flying very low. When we manned the piece

of trench at La Vacquerie I was ordered with a platoon—all men of different units—to save, if possible, the battery of guns there. We lay among them, with whizzbangs hurtling around, whilst the retirement filtered by, when we took possession of a trench in rear, where a K.R.R. colonel had taken command. He seemed to be always looking for a subaltern to stop the German advance and found me three times in one day for the purpose of establishing blocks and bombing up trenches. He was certainly a man of action."

During November 32 other ranks were killed or died of wounds, 112 were wounded and 15 were reported missing. The greater proportion were casualties resulting from the fighting on November 30th. Six officers and 61 other ranks joined the Battalion.

Owing to an attack being expected from Gonnellieu, "C" Company were sent at 10 a.m. on December 1st to Fifteen Ravine in support of the 12th Rifle Brigade. Fifteen minutes later heavy shellfire was directed against the British line from Gonnellieu to La Vacquerie. Fortunately the enemy had not accurately registered the positions except at Foster Lane. The attack upon Gonnellieu was beaten off, but the Germans got into Foster Lane, where "B" Company and the 12th K.R.R. made a fine fight of it. Acting Captain Julian Lawson Whalley, in command of the Company, was mortally wounded and 2nd Lieut. Burgess took over and held on with what men he could collect. Whalley had had to cross the road at Foster Lane to establish a post and was hit whilst so doing. Meanwhile, "A" Company endeavoured to get into touch with the left of "D" Company and were caught by the barrage, which forced them to wait until it had died down. Upon a second attempt being made they found the enemy in the front line between them and Foster Lane. The Company promptly bombed him out and established a block at the junction of Foster Lane and the old front line. The situation became very obscure opposite both Gonnellieu and La Vacquerie, and "D" Company were sent forward to occupy Game Support on the Gonnellieu front. Numbers of stragglers from various regiments came through Battalion headquarters with alarming reports, but "A" and "D" Companies continually sent reassuring messages. "B" Company, however, owing to its being mixed up with the K.R.R., was out of touch with Battalion headquarters. "C" Company still remained in position in Fifteen Ravine. On the left of "A" Company were the Buffs. At 2 p.m. the 61st Brigade headquarters withdrew to its rear station and the evacuated position was taken over by the Essex; telephonic communication was in this way secured with the Brigade. At 8 p.m. on that eventful day the Battalion was ordered to side-step to the old front and support lines on the left of the village road on relief by elements of the 188rd Brigade. This move was accomplished without mishap by 1 a.m. on December 2nd, battalion headquarters being

established just north of Villers Plouich. No rest was possible, for a captured document led to the belief that another attack on both La Vacquerie and Gonnellieu would take place shortly and there was still no news of reinforcements moving up or of adequate artillery support. This anxiety was relieved later in the day, for intimation was received that other troops were coming into the sector and the order was, therefore, cancelled that if the enemy broke through from Gonnellieu, the Battalion should move to the left 3,000 yards, to a point where the line turned round and consolidate the parados. There were no regular supplies of rations or water except what the men could "scrounge." The enemy had barraged the trenches during the night and knocked out the only runners who knew the position of the ration dump. December 4th passed off much more quietly than had been expected, save for intermittent shelling of headquarters, and at 6 p.m. the worn-out men of the Essex were withdrawn to Heudecourt, which was reached without a single casualty. "These days of retreat," wrote a member of the 9th Essex, "were of unrelenting activity. Rations were taken to Villers Plouich by pack mules and left there for those to pick up who were fortunate enough to be there first. The village was always under heavy shellfire and dead men and mules lay about, mute evidence of its accuracy. Guns left in No Man's Land were brought in as quickly as possible. Details of regiments were sorted out. Battalion headquarters were constantly changed, but throughout the spirit of the troops never flagged."

On December 5th the Battalion marched to Cartigny, thence on December 6th to Bouzincourt area, and the next day entrained to Aveluy station to Berguette, from which town it marched to Witternesse. Refitting and training followed for several days, after which the Battalion moved, on December 16th, to Robecq and then, on December 21st, to Merville as part of XV Corps. On Christmas Eve the Lewis gunners were increased to 36 per company and next day Christmas was observed—although they knew it not, the last to be celebrated on active service. Training in Lewis gun work, bayonet fighting and bombing were the chief occupations until the year closed. Seven officers and 148 other ranks joined during the month, whilst the casualties, in addition to Captain Whalley, were 2nd Lieut. Thomas Eldred Curwen Haworth (who died of wounds on December 2nd), another officer wounded and two other ranks killed and nine wounded.

QUIETER DAYS.

The Division was made complete once again on New Year Day, 1918, by the arrival of the artillery, from which it had been separated since the Cambrai operations. Very wintry conditions prevailed, which interfered with training. The latter was very necessary, as drafts were arriving, and on January 1st the officer commanding 9th Essex inspected a detachment

of 108 other ranks which had reported for duty. A thaw on January 2nd was only temporary, for hard frost came again on January 5th. Another thaw was followed by heavy snowstorms on January 8th and 9th, so that again training was held up, lectures and gas drill only being given indoors. A brigade assault competition took place on January 14th, in which the 9th Essex gained second place. The day before that the Division had once more entered the front line, the 86th and 87th Brigades taking the places of the 88th Division in the Fleurbaix sector (headquarters at Croix du Bac), with the 85th Brigade in reserve. The Portuguese were on the right and the point of contact was a post, known as the "International," which was garrisoned by both British and Portuguese. On the left was the 57th Division—these were the three divisions which constituted the XV Corps. "It was a quiet sector, nothing having occurred there since September, 1915, but, in common with the remainder of the front it assumed a more lively aspect from the commencement of the year. The front line trenches, situated in very low-lying ground, marshy at this time of the year, were mostly derelict and suffering from old age. As a consequence, they were held by posts, the support being the resistance line." It was known that Germany was preparing for a big attack, so "several new series of trenches with switches were dug, reaching as far back as the western bank of the River Lys, concrete machine gun emplacements were built, and miles of wire put up. Unfortunately, at a later date, 11th April, this was of little avail, as the Germans broke through on the Portuguese front, and though the position held out for a short time, it was eventually enveloped and the troops had to be withdrawn. This is somewhat foretelling events, however, and when it did occur the Division was far away in Albert." The 9th Essex marched to billets in Sailly on January 15th, the Corps commander watching them and expressing approval. Training was again the order of the day until January 21st, when the 11th Middlesex (86th Brigade) were relieved in the Cordonniere sub-sector, the front line being entirely composed of breastworks in urgent need of repair. Ahead of it was a series of isolated strong points, to which access was obtained by shallow communication trenches. Support and reserve trenches did not exist. Ruined farmhouses and huts of elephant iron, strengthened with sandbags, were occupied by the support platoons and companies. Officer patrols went out nightly, but otherwise there was little variation from the routine. A most exciting incident happened to a party of the 86th Brigade on 29th January. It was proceeding to the relief of one of the posts when it suddenly encountered a number of Germans. The latter were promptly attacked and driven off, leaving two prisoners behind. The only casualties to the 9th Essex during the month were one killed and one wounded. Five officers and 85 other ranks reported for duty.

GERMANS' DARING RAID.

A party of about a dozen Germans made a daring raid. They first feinted against F Post on February 2nd, but were driven off. Two or three of them, however, got through the Essex wire, crossed over the front line and got under the wire along the eastern side of Mine Avenue. By this route they returned again to the front line, shot the sentry on the post, took away his steel helmet and made off towards the support line. Search was immediately made, but no trace of the enemy could be found. The incident happened at dawn and was the more daring because the sentry was only a few feet away from his companion. The Essex had a "very quiet day" on February 4th, but it was far different with a post of the 36th Brigade, which was attacked in the early morning and lost two killed and two wounded, whilst three signallers and a stretcher-bearer, in a shelter, were taken prisoners. Retaliation was made the next morning, when a party from "A" Company of the 9th Essex, under 2nd Lieut. S. A. Warner, raided an enemy post and took four prisoners and a light machine gun, whilst another German was left dead. The party returned to the British lines at 4.55 a.m., after an absence of nearly three hours. The only casualties were two men slightly wounded. The 35th Brigade was relieved on February 7th by the 37th, the movement being complicated by the fact that a two battalion front was being substituted for a three battalion. The Battalion marched to billets in Sailly, where, on February 11th, three officers and 117 other ranks joined from the disbanded 13th Essex, which battalion had obtained the distinction of special mention in Sir Douglas Haig's despatches for the part it played in resisting the German counterstroke at Cambrai. On February 13th the Battalion relieved the 5th Royal Berkshires in the reserve battalion area of the Bois Grenier sector, where the finding of working parties was the chief occupation, until the 9th Essex went again into the front line on February 22nd. There they remained until the end of the month. The casualties for February were one killed and four others wounded. The month was notable in the 12th Division, as in all other divisions, by a reduction of the brigades from a four battalion to a three battalion establishment. The 35th Brigade thus lost the 5th Royal Berkshires, the 36th Brigade the 8th Royal Fusiliers and the 37th Brigade the 7th East Surreys.

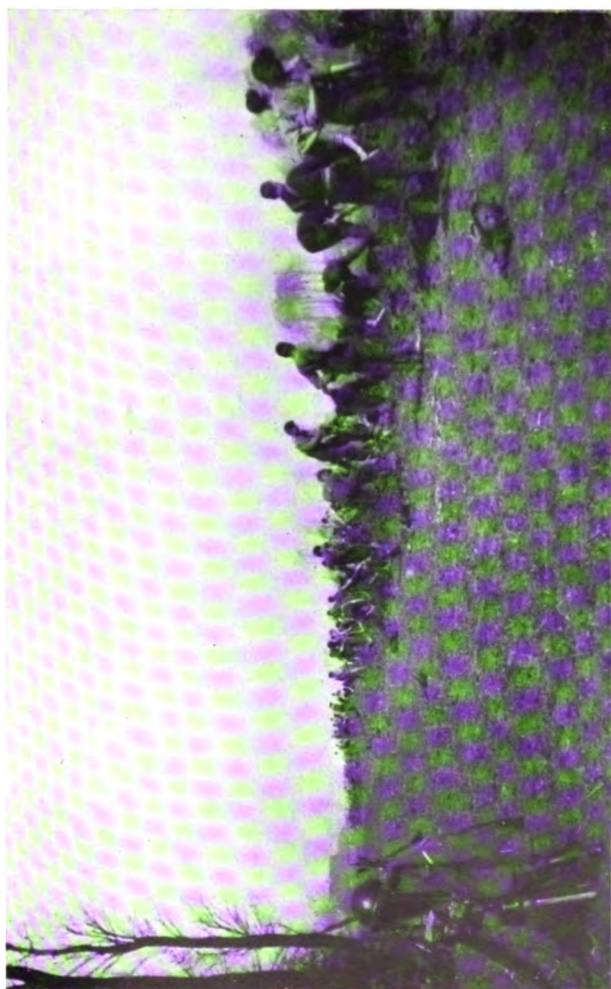
THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE.

The long-expected enemy offensive was imminent; the signs were too obvious to be mistaken. March opened with an intense gas shell bombardment upon the 9th Essex lines, no fewer than 1,500 to 2,000 missiles coming over. This did not prevent Captain Nash and thirty men of "C" Company, of the 7th Norfolks, carrying out their raid from the Essex sector. They

killed ten men and took one prisoner "of exceptional height and physique." The Battalion went into billets at Nouveau Monde on March 2nd, where football in the afternoons was a welcome relief to the morning's work. Whilst the Essex were in reserve, there was considerable raiding by the Royal Sussex and Royal West Kents, numbers of Germans being killed and captured. The reason for this activity was that fresh German divisions were known to have been moved into the area and when the Essex went into the line again on March 10th they quickly realized the effect of this additional pressure. On the night of the 12th March, under cover of heavy shelling of the Battalion headquarters, two large enemy parties, each one hundred strong, came up against F Post, held by two N.C.O.'s and ten privates of the 9th Essex, with a Lewis gun, under Corporal Carlton. The raid was quickly beaten off without casualty, the Germans leaving three dead. On another day the 9th Essex sustained the loss of three other ranks killed and 21 wounded by shellfire. In the middle of the month the Portuguese reported their wire was cut and that there were gaps in the enemy wire. The night of March 18th-19th was a perfect whirlwind of raid and counter-raid. The 7th Suffolks went over at 8.30 p.m., but found the enemy's line unoccupied and so retired. Half an hour later the Germans failed to enter a post of the 7th Norfolks and were smitten by a counter-attack. At 10.10 p.m. the enterprising enemy were again active against two posts of the 6th Buffs, and at 11 p.m. were ejected from the Royal West Kent position. The Germans also struck at the 37th Brigade, but without result. Their right party was beaten off and the left had the misfortune to come up against the 6th Queen's, waiting in No Man's Land for the raid which they were to undertake. The Queen's hit back and captured four prisoners. The last effort was at 3.20 a.m. on that exciting night, and this was against the 9th Essex. One post was so heavily shelled that 10 out of 13 of the garrison became casualties. Private S. Nightingale, a young soldier, took charge, and pluckily held off all attempts at their capture, whilst Private Haley, a stretcher-bearer, attended to the wounded. At another post Sergeant Pollington, on the parapet, was pulled down and taken prisoner. When being conducted to the rear, he struck one captor with his steel helmet and knocked the other down with his fist, having the good fortune to reach his own line in safety. "Whilst searching the ground next morning a German was captured, who was clearly out of luck. Managing to escape from the prisoner of war camp at St. Omer, he had reached our front line posts and most certainly would have got free but for the incessant raids." For their exploits on that night of nights all the units engaged were specially congratulated by both the Army and Corps commanders. The relief of the 12th Division commenced on the 21st and on March 24th the Battalion moved by route

march to Miquellerie, hoping for a period of rest. They were there for just six hours, when, in common with the rest of the Division, except the artillery, they were hurriedly embarked on 'buses on Busnes-Lillers road and spent all night on the journey. They had a short rest of six hours at Bouzincourt, near Albert, and were then ordered to Fricourt. They had nearly reached this place when orders came to return to Albert, where the night of the 25th-26th was spent. The enemy had struck with all his might upon the Somme. He was already pressing back the Fifth Army and troops were being hurriedly brought up in an endeavour to fill the gap.

Late in 1917 Russia had ceased to be a belligerent, but though the United States troops were arriving in increasing numbers, thus gradually redressing the balance of man power, some time must elapse before they could exercise a decisive influence. The Germans, in these circumstances, sought to force the issue before the Allies could fully utilize the American armies. At the end of January the British forces had become responsible for an additional 28 miles of front as far as Baxisis, and this fact, coupled with the knowledge that a hostile offensive was imminent, caused Sir Douglas Haig to adopt a defensive policy. Accordingly, every available man was employed upon the construction and strengthening of defences and the improvement of communications thereto. Operations during the winter period were thus confined to minor adjustments of the lines, at Bullecourt, in the Cambrai sector, Menin Road and Houlthulst Forest. About the middle of February the General Staff became convinced that the enemy offensive was imminent. German and Austrian forces had been gradually transferred to the western theatre and before the attack developed it was known that the infantry divisions had been increased by 46 to 192 since the previous November. Sixty-four German divisions were employed in the first movement and against them were disposed the Third and Fifth Armies, consisting of 29 infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, of which only nineteen were in the line. The offensive opened on March 21st on a front of 52 miles, which was extended until, on March 28th, it affected fully 63 miles of the British line, from La Fere to beyond Gavrelle. On the first day the enemy had made so much progress that the British troops were withdrawn behind the Croyat Canal to the Somme Canal and from Havrincourt and Hermies. The next day the Croyat Canal was crossed and Le Verguier and Epehy passed into enemy occupation. The Germans were held on portions of the Third Army front, but broke through along the line of Croisilles—Henen-sur-Cojeul Road, and that night (March 22nd) orders were given to fall back behind the line of the Somme, which involved the abandonment of the Peronne bridgehead. Fierce fighting continued and the Germans next day crossed the Somme above Hem and Pirthon by means of

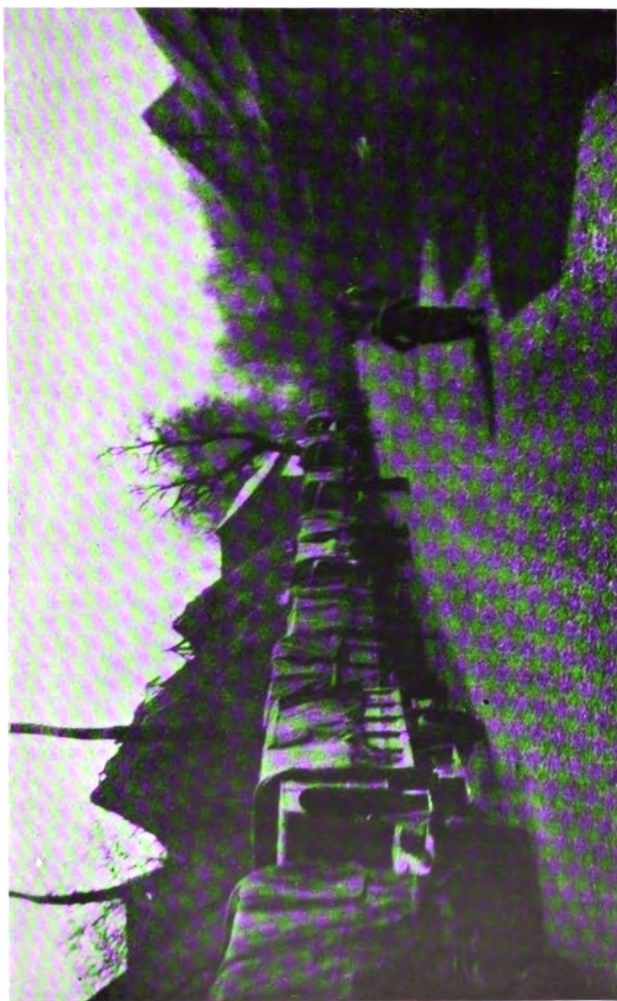


Working Party at Estaires, March, 1918.

undestroyed bridges, but by the afternoon the British Army had been brought across to the near bank and there was a more cheery feeling abroad because enemy progress had been definitely checked on the front of the Third Army. The situation was critical, however, at the junction of the Third and Fifth Armies and to afford support French troops were moved into the Fifth Army sector south of Peronne. The next day (March 24th) the enemy met with some success in the centre of the British line, so that the connection of the two Armies was threatened. They also entered Combles, captured Morval and made substantial progress in the direction of Lesbœufs. On the Somme front the Germans reached Morchain, whilst farther south the line was forced in the neighbourhood of Chauny. The British fell back behind the River Ancre on March 25th, whilst Noyon, Nesle and Roye were also over-run. On March 26th Carey's famous emergency force was formed on the line of the old Amiens defences between Mezieres, Marcelcave and Hamel, the same day that unity of command was achieved by the appointment of Marshal Foch to the control of the Allied forces. The enemy made desperate efforts from Nesle to pierce the junction of the English and French Armies. There was better news from the north, where the line became more stabilized. Albert was occupied by the Germans on March 27th and the safety of Amiens was jeopardized. Then came the great hostile attack on the Arras front on March 28th, where the British line triumphantly stood the test. The offensive died down for a while, but came again on April 4th and April 5th. The enemy did not make much progress, however. Then, on April 9th, came the break through along the line of the Lys and so much progress was made that Merville fell on April 10th and the withdrawal from Nieppe and Hill 63 followed. The enemy made a desperate thrust towards Hazebrouck. Bailleul was in their hands on April 15th and our occupation of Passchendaele Ridge was relinquished. Meanwhile, fighting had again developed further south, where Villers Bretonneux was finally held by British troops. Enemy pressure caused drastic restriction of the Ypres Salient and by April 25th Kemmel Hill had fallen. This was, however, the last substantial enemy success in this sector and by the end of the month the onset was definitely held and the whole line stabilized. "In the six weeks of almost constant fighting from March 21st to 30th April, a total of 55 British infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions was employed on the battle front against a force of 109 German divisions."

Where fighting was there the 12th Division was likely soon to be engaged, and on March 25th it reached the Senlis area in hurried march to the battle front. News was vague and uncertain because of the movement of the Third and Fifth Armies under the weight of the German onslaught. This was evidenced by the hurried passage of troops which was taking place. The

37th Brigade was ordered to Contalmaison and reached La Boisselle at 6.15 p.m., the advanced headquarters of the 47th Division. The Brigade was ordered to counter-attack Pozieres and establish communication between the 47th and 68rd Divisions. The 6th Queen's and 6th Royal West Kents were deployed astride the Albert-Bapaume road for the operation when the order was cancelled and a line of outposts taken up through Ovillers. Pozieres was reconnoitred by a patrol and found to be unoccupied. The 37th Brigade covered the withdrawal of the 47th Division over the Ancre and then retired early on the morning of March 26th upon Aveluy Bridge, where the 36th Brigade was met. The river was crossed and the 12th Division reunited. The 36th Brigade had been ordered to Montauban and was marching thereupon via Mametz and Carnoy when it was recalled and sent by way of Albert to the 12th Division line which had been established west of the River Ancre. The 35th Brigade was despatched to Maricourt, which was found to be in flames. Beyond the village the 9th Divisional headquarters were found, when orders were received to report at Albert, which was reached at 12.30 a.m. on March 26th. There, after a short rest, the Brigade rose before dawn and took up positions covering the approaches of the town and their sector of the west bank of the Ancre. The brigades had concentrated because of orders received by the 12th Division to cover Albert and safeguard the western bank of the Ancre to Hamel, a front of 9,000 yards. The 35th Brigade, on the right, overlooked Albert and held the line to Aveluy Bridge (9th Essex nominally in support, but actually in close contact with the enemy), the 36th Brigade then continuing the responsibility, with a battalion in reserve at Martinsart, whilst the 37th Brigade carried on to Hamel, with the reserve at Mesnil. The line was without customary defences and the river bridges had not been prepared for destruction. Being without entrenching tools, all that could be done was to make the best use possible of natural features, particularly the Ancre flowing along the Division's front. Touch was obtained with the 9th Division on the Albert-Amiens railway line, whilst on the left was the 2nd Division. The 12th Division was still without its artillery and so was served by units from three other divisions. Soon after midday the storm burst upon the Division. The Germans flowed down the Ancre valley and as the right of the 35th Brigade fell back, they occupied Albert. Heavy fighting ensued, in which a company of the 9th Essex were engaged, and the enemy still made progress. The 36th Brigade held its own in and about Aveluy, and the attack was also repulsed on the 37th Brigade front, where strong efforts were made by the enemy to occupy Mesnil. The Germans renewed their attack on March 27th, but met with no substantial success against the Suffolks and Essex in their endeavour to debouch from Albert. Another attack later in



Transport passing through Louvencourt, between Donlens and Albert.

the day in the vicinity of the railway station and towards Aveluy caused the 7th Norfolks to withdraw to a position about three-quarters of a mile in the rear. This movement also affected the right of the 36th Brigade, which cut off a platoon of the 9th Fusiliers on the far side of Aveluy Bridge. Owing to the dashing leadership of Captain Bandains, the men safely reached the British side of the bank. Still another attack by the Germans made further progress and the Brigade line had to be reorganized south of Martinsart Wood and in Aveluy Wood. The 37th Brigade withdrew from Hamel and relinquished its hold of the railway line on the right. The Norfolks and Suffolks, of the 35th Brigade, suffered very considerably in this day's combat. The enemy struck again at 9 a.m. on March 28th against the fronts of the 36th and 37th Brigades from the direction of Aveluy. He made some progress on the east side of Aveluy Wood, but the line was re-established later in the day. The Division, shattered, exhausted, but unbeaten, was relieved on the night of March 28th-29th, "having made an obstinate resistance to the six enemy divisions opposing it and having been instrumental in bringing the great German advance to a halt in this area." After a couple of days' rest, the Division took over from the 17th Division on April 2nd in the right corps sector, with a frontage of 4,000 yards due west of Albert, divisional headquarters being at Warloy. At 1 p.m. on April 4th the Suffolks and the Essex beat off a fierce attack in which a small post was lost and then regained. At 7 a.m. on April 5th, after an intense bombardment, another unsuccessful hostile attack was launched, but the line was held notwithstanding heavy casualties. Try as they would, the Germans could not advance from Albert. The Essex were involved in further fighting on April 6th, following which the Division became complete again, for its artillery rejoined. There was periodical shelling, but nothing else of importance, and on the night of April 12th-13th the Division was relieved by the 38th Division, having suffered in eight days casualties amounting to 1,285. It marched back to Toutencourt area. The 9th Essex were billeted at Hérissart and supplied large working parties for the front line. The dismal news came through that certain of the battalions had lost their stores. They had been dumped at Fleurbaix and Merville on the rapid march south and had been seized by the enemy upon their occupation of these towns. The 1st Cambridgeshires arrived and became part of the 35th Brigade, having absorbed the remnants of the 7th Suffolks, whom they replaced. Work was active upon defences amid much anxiety as to what was happening in the north. On April 23rd the Division relieved the New Zealanders, covering the line Mailly Maillet and Auchonvillers—36th Brigade on the right and 35th on the left.

Major-General Scott bade affectionate farewell on April 26th upon appointment to a command in India and in his final order,

having paid tribute to the fighting qualities of the troops, he said: "There is no better command than that of a division in the field, and I thoroughly appreciate the honour I have had in commanding the 12th Division for over two and a half years. To leave it is a great wrench and I feel it very much, but you may be assured my thoughts will always be with you and I shall continue to watch carefully for all your doings. Under all circumstances be as you always have been, cheerful and confident. To you all, good-bye and the best of luck." General Scott was succeeded by Major-General H. W. Higginson, who had been for two years in command of the 53rd Brigade of the 18th Division, a brigade which included the 10th Essex. The troops suffered much from shelling in Auchonvillers, Mailly Maillet and Englebelmer, particularly the first-named, which was the point where the troops were relieved and supplies stored. The total casualties for April were 1,487.

FATEFUL DAYS FOR THE BATTALION.

The War Diary of the 9th Essex is most laconic concerning the part played in those last fateful days of March. The gap has been filled, however, by the recollections of Lieut.-Colonel Sales de la Terriere, who wrote: The 9th Essex was billeted in rear of the Lys, and during the very short time it was allowed to recuperate from a lengthy period of service in the trenches, it had an opportunity of witnessing one of the saddest sights of war. All day long processions of old men and women and young children were to be seen evacuating their homes, pushing such few household treasures as could be taken on wheelbarrows, prams or extemporary trolleys, silently and hopelessly, knowing, as they must, that their homes, if not destroyed by shellfire, would certainly fall into disrepair and their possessions scattered during their absence. Equally, the troops knew that such a delightful billet was too good to be true and the very next day the Battalion received orders to embus at dusk for an unknown destination. The entire 12th Division was picked up by the roadside and those who were unlucky enough to have to sit on the upper deck had good reason for the usual hopes that it "would keep line for it." Some excellent staff work was accomplished and the convoy started on its way. On arriving outside Lillers we were halted at the railway crossing for one of those seemingly interminable delays the reason for which is never known to those who only stand and wait. As a matter of fact, on the previous night the successful combination of a trainload of hay, ditto of munitions and a good shot from an enemy bombing plane had disorganized—in fact, one might say disintegrated—both Lillers and the railway, so that the appearance of a Gotha flying slowly backwards and forwards over the convoy entertained us considerably during the prolonged halt. Blinded by numerous searchlights, it was only a hundred feet up and little realized

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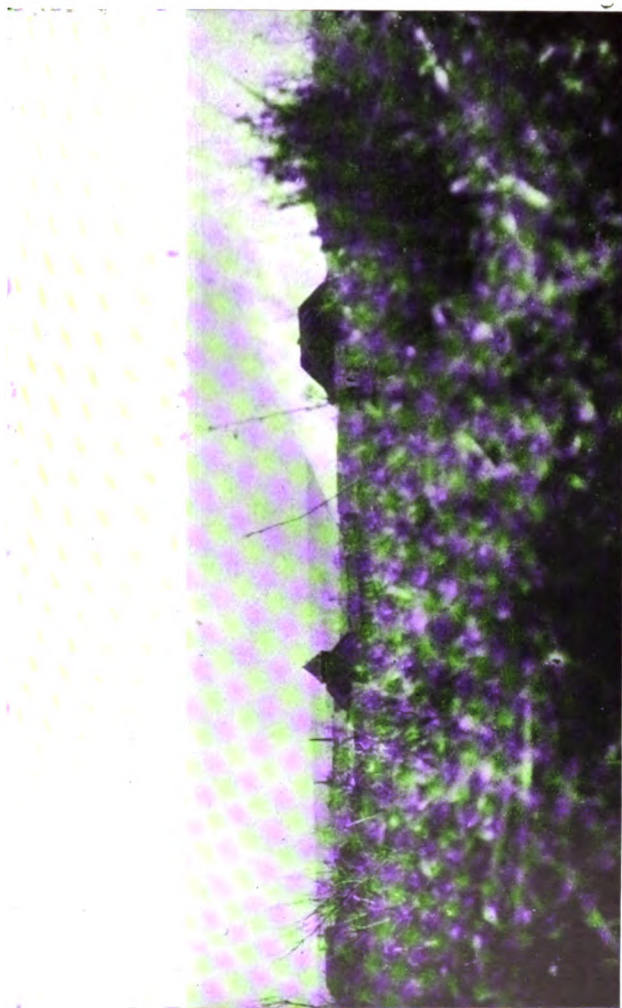
what a gift it was missing. The anti-aircraft batteries, however, on both sides of the road, provided the necessary excitement, considerable betting taking place as to which 'bus, owing to their low elevation, they would hit first. At last we proceeded on our journey and not till late the next morning did we reach our destination, which proved to be Bouzincourt, a few miles west of Albert. Here we were dumped by the roadside, very weary and aching from a journey of about 70 miles. We got orders to march at dusk to Fricourt and take up an outpost position covering Albert (March 26th). Albert was being intermittently shelled and there were two or three teams of dead horses lying in the streets. We had no casualties and, on reaching the other side of the town, those who had been through the Somme offensive in 1916 were greeted by the same desolation of ruins, old gunpits, trenches and shellholes, and there appeared to be shells falling in exactly the same places as usual, so that we almost wondered if the last two years had not been just a dream. Any illusions on this subject were, however, soon dispelled, for on reaching Becordel-Bécourt we received the information that we were the only British troops that side of the Ancre, and the order was "About turn!" The Battalion was very tired, so tired, in fact, that the men were completely silent—not even a grouse was heard. On reaching Albert again we wasted no time, but, selecting the best houses in our area, entered them and went straight to sleep. There was no shelling, as the enemy was evidently uncertain as to the position of his own troops and we had a perfect night's rest. At noon next day we moved out and selected a position at the foot of the downs a few hundred yards north-west of the town, where we quickly dug ourselves in, "A" Company on the right overlooking the road to Bouzincourt, "C" on the left overlooking the railway and station in Albert. Our good discipline made us leave behind in Albert many comforts, such as chickens, wine, bread and cooking and eating utensils and, according to an account since published by the German writer Binding, this probably saved thousands of our lives, if not the British Army, because the enemy, who came cycling gaily in, firing off Verey lights, just after we had left, gave themselves up to an orgy of drink and looting, being quite out of hand for several days, and completely stopping the advance on Amiens, so vital to their success. On the second day "C" Company, under Captain Turner Comber, saw the extraordinary spectacle of what appeared to be a battalion parading outside the railway station and fired off 2,000 rounds before the attempt was given up. This was the sort of gift that a soldier only gets once in a lifetime and "C" Company must have felt that the war had not been in vain. We remained in this position several days (I cannot remember who was on our flanks), subjected to a certain amount of shelling on the right and machine gun fire from the left flank. The only human creature who had emerged from Albert

was one solitary civilian dressed in his best black suiting and pushing a wheelbarrow—possibly the Mayor salving his regalia. He caused considerable alarm and despondency to the piquet on the road, who were uncertain whether to help him with his barrow or shoot him as a spy. However, he was allowed to pass. A tragic spectacle was enacted in front of our line. Von Richthofen, the famous German airman, brought over his circus of triplanes. There was at the moment no British R.A.F. formation in the neighbourhood, but solitary airmen, dropping in one at a time, all, without exception, went baldheaded for the nearest 'plane, and one after the other—five in all—were put down in flames just in front of us, riddled by the combined fire of the circus. The same day an R.E. officer arrived from G.H.Q. with instructions to blow up the bridge over the Ancres and the sluices in Albert!

The losses were significant of the heavy fighting in which the 9th Essex were engaged, for four officers (Lieut. H. E. W. Elliott and H. S. Cope wounded and two others missing) and 128 other ranks were reported killed, wounded or missing. Relief came on March 28th, when the Battalion was succeeded by the 6th Dorsets and marched to billets in Hénencourt.

It is possible to follow the movements of "C" Company (Captain Turner Comber) in detail. On the morning of March 26th the Company took up a position in support of the 7th Suffolks, who were holding the front line on the south side of the River Ancres to the west of Albert.¹ During the daylight hours every approach to the town was ranged by fire to delay the enemy occupation, the officer in command correcting inaccuracies of range by noting the impact of the bullets on roads, fields and other points. Ammunition was not plentiful and search was made for spare rounds, the spoil including two boxes retrieved from Albert. In the afternoon the enemy were observed to be massing to the east of the town and about 5.30 p.m. they entered Albert. The vanguard rode in on cycles from the east side and immediately put up white Verey lights to indicate their position to the main body. Two of the invaders were killed by rifle fire within twenty yards of the divisional line. The night was very cold, but the men were kept warm by work upon the trenches, which required a great deal of repair. The first attack was made at 8 a.m. on March 27th. The onset was preceded by a light barrage on the 7th Suffolks, lasting about a quarter of an hour, during which the enemy brought up troops at great speed, massing them in the station yard and to the east of the town. "C" Company of the Essex, in their front line position, were under intense bombardment, several of the shells bursting within the entrenchments. They were also enfiladed by machine gun fire

1. The Company were under orders to give support to the Suffolks, but the configuration of the ground made it necessary for "C" Company to become a front line company.



Albert under Shellfire, as seen from 9th Essex Position.



At Night: Army Store on Fire at Albert, as seen from 9th Essex Position.

from the tower of Albert Church. "The air," wrote an officer, "was full of aeroplanes, including triplanes, then novel and fearsome-looking contrivances. They were flying very low and scattering machine gun bullets on our men in the trenches. It was an inferno, which gradually died down." The attack was completely repulsed by the steady fire of all arms. The Germans attacked later in the morning, however, under cover of a mixed barrage, and the 7th Suffolks were reinforced by the platoon of the 9th Essex, as mentioned above. They succeeded in taking a small portion of the position by weight of numbers, in which they placed machine guns so as to command the flanks. Their effort was aided a good deal by machine gun fire from the cathedral and adjacent houses. The enemy endeavoured to withdraw at nightfall from the eastern side of the town and presented a target of which the Lewis gunners and riflemen made effective use, the road being strewn with dead and wounded. The ration limbers were also seen endeavouring to leave by the same way. They, too, were caught by our fire, which killed two of the drivers and caused the horses to stampede down the road. By the light from burning buildings the Germans were detected advancing in extended order, but were quickly dispersed. The rifle fire during these operations had been so continuous that it was found necessary to clean the weapons by relays, whilst the expenditure of ammunition entailed the employment of six men without cessation in carrying small arms ammunition to the firing points. This work was not without peril, for owing to intense machine gun fire the bandoliers at one trench had to be thrown across the road dividing the trench one at a time and in turn carried either to the Lewis gunners or riflemen. In the early morning of the 28th March "C" Company were relieved and marched independently by platoons to billets in Hénencourt. They were in a very exhausted state. The men had barely settled down, when the bombardment of Wénencourt caused the C.O. to order the Battalion to disperse in small parties in Hénencourt Wood, from which they returned to their billets later in the day.

HOLDING THE LINE NEAR ALBERT.

The 9th Essex were attached to the 17th Division and had orders to move at an hour's notice to their support. The Albert-Bouzin court road was reconnoitred in case of an enemy thrust in that direction. On April 4th the Battalion relieved the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers in the left sector of the Brigade front on the right of the Albert-Bouzin court road, and suffered harassing fire of all arms. "Immediately in our rear," wrote an officer, "was a bare steep hill; and no movement by day was possible. Further, our very sketchy trenches were overlooked by a ridge, a short distance in front of the position, and well observed artillery and trench mortar fire soon began to cause us casualties. These were very difficult to deal with, as the

bare open down behind us provided no cover and battalion headquarters were only 'housed' in a wooden musketry hut in the open. Though not visible from the right, it was in full view of the Cathedral tower, which had been speedily occupied by the enemy, who used it as an outpost and a machine gun post, enjoying, by reason of its sacred position, that immunity from punishment which makes fighting in a friendly country so harassing. This cathedral tower carried on its top the famous 'Hanging Virgin,' whose fall was reputed to signify the end of the war, and I think I am right in saying that the pointed remarks of the infantry to our divisional artillery, combined with some aspersions on their prowess as shots, caused the statue to descend and fulfil the prophecy. After we had had ten days' continuous front line work, the battalion, which was considerably below strength, and further depleted by casualties, was so physically tired out that a letter was sent to Brigade requesting an immediate relief or the men would be asleep at their posts. There were, of course, no proper dug-outs, an immense amount of work to be done on the trenches and considerable shelling, particularly with gas shells. The valley on our left had a perpetual blue haze over it, the damp and muggy weather being particularly suitable for the retention of such poisonous vapours as the enemy had at his disposal and headquarters had to wear their gas helmets most of the day. In front of us at this time were the German marines. They were an unusually useless lot and one night a party blundered over to our lines, drunk and disorderly. They were well received—but not in the way they had evidently hoped." The Battalion was ordered into Brigade reserve on the top of the hill in immediate rear of the position. The evacuation of the line on April 5th—no one took over from the Essex—was observed and the unit was heavily shelled and trench mortared, the right company, acting as rearguard, having a particularly nasty time in the quarry, which formed the right of the position. At 7 a.m. an intense bombardment by guns of all calibres, with gas shells, trench mortars and machine guns, plastered front and support lines, back areas and communications. It was irregular in timing, creeping hither and thither, and did not cease until 8.15 a.m. Three quarters of an hour later the right of the Battalion was attacked under cover of an enfilade machine gun fire, but the hostile effort was driven back with considerable loss. By 11 a.m. there was relative quiet again. Half an hour after noon, however, another barrage was put down on the right and centre, including the Quarry, under protection of which a field gun was brought up, but it was destroyed by Lewis gun and rifle fire and the crew killed. The trench on the left flank was practically flattened out and the men enfiladed by machine guns, so that they were compelled to sideslip to the right of the Suffolks. The Lewis gun team was knocked out, but though casualties were heavy,

the enemy could only filter a few men into the vacated trench.

During the evening another attack of the strength of about two companies was made against the centre, but was quickly dispersed. "A" company (Captain Robertson) had a most trying day, for the stoutest part of the hostile effort was directed against them and they fired no fewer than 15,000 rounds of small arms ammunition. They were cut off from artillery support and so had to rely entirely upon their own exertions. Communication to the rear was cut, but a line was preserved to the support company and thence orderlies were sent to Brigade headquarters. The Quarry was held by a platoon of the Company (2nd Lieut. C. S. James) and the assailants endeavoured to cut off the garrison by working down the communication trench, but they were stoutly beaten off by bombing. Foiled in this direction, they dropped trench mortar shells into the Quarry, aeroplanes flew low and fired into it, whilst the cross fire from machine guns was continuous. In the afternoon (4.30 p.m.) the bombardment upon this position again became intense, which ceased upon a white light being fired on the south side of the Quarry. This was followed by another determined attack, which overwhelmed the gallant platoon. Lieut. James ordered the men to retire to the main position as best they could and he, himself, was found four hours later in a shellhole with a wounded thigh. At 5 p.m. there was heavy shelling of the Amiens-Albert road, which was responded to by the British artillery, but there was no infantry attack. April 7th was quiet, save for intermittent gunfire, and in the evening the Battalion was relieved and returned to the Corps emergency line on the Hérencourt-Senlis road, where for the next two days it had to endure hostile bombardments. Having thoughts of rest, the Battalion was extremely annoyed to find the position being heavily shelled and a terrific battle taking place about half a mile to the S.E. There was, however, a large and pleasant wood behind the village, and here the Essex bivouacked for the day, unshelled and in pleasant surroundings, after reporting to the Brigade which was either receiving or making an attack and being thanked and told it would not be required to join in. When things had quietened down the Battalion occupied the cellars in the village, and although the Australians had passed that way, there was a considerable amount of consumable stores, both animal and vegetable. The men, therefore, enjoyed a diet of fresh beef, pork, potatoes and poultry.

Two personal experiences are related of this time by Lieut. Mussett. "The Quarry portion of the line," wrote he, "was occupied by 'A' Company, whose headquarters consisted of two white bell tents, nestling in the Quarry, and in them Captain Robertson and the M.O. carried on their duties. Visiting 'A's' section of the line, to the left and slightly forward of 'C's' in the small hours, I shall always remember dear old Robby seated in his tent, during a lull in the night's gunfire, engaged in writing

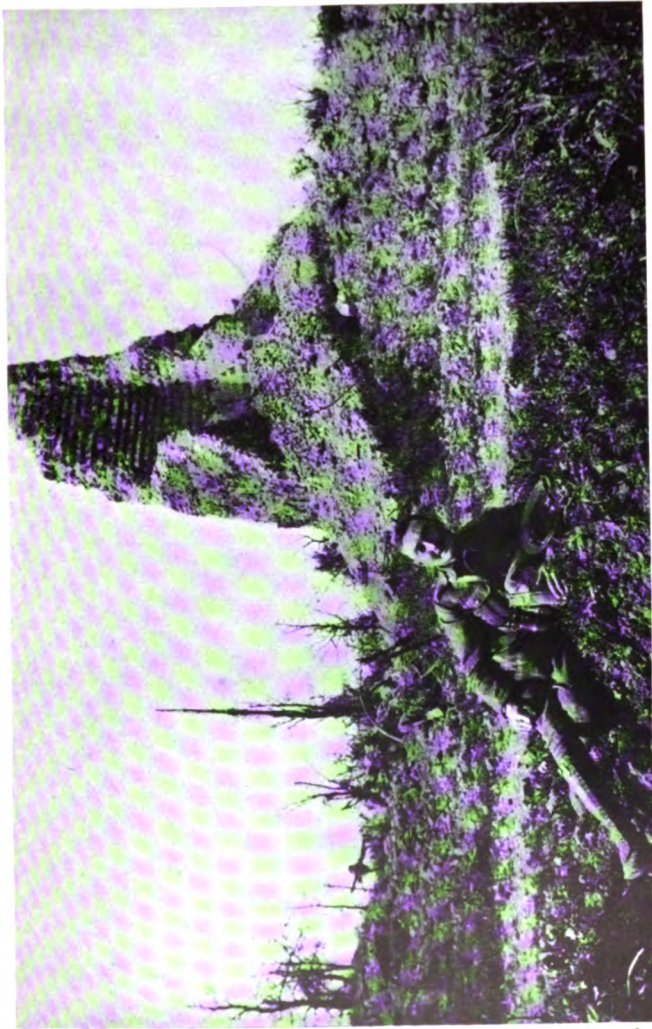
by a candle's glimmering ray, with an old wooden box against the tent-pole as writing table, with conscientious thoroughness writing some returns himself, whilst others were taking the opportunity of a much needed rest. The second was when Lieut. Wardall (Battalion Intelligence Officer), during the enemy bombardment, fired an S.O.S. rocket and signal for the support of our artillery. Somehow the rocket did not burst aloft in the conventional way, but returned, still sparking furiously, and nearly set fire to Battalion headquarters, which consisted of a small black hut above ground, with cellar below."

The 9th Essex moved to billets in Warloy and subsequently to Harponville, which was reached on April 8th. A draft of 64 other ranks joined the depleted Battalion. Major G. Green took over temporary command upon Lieut.-Colonel de Sales La Terriere entering hospital. On April 15th billets were occupied at Herissart, where an A.R.A. competition resulted in a victory for "B" Company, with 246 points. There was a move again to Acheux on April 23rd, whence the next day the 3rd New Zealand Rifles were relieved near to Mailly Maillet.

The month's casualties were heavy, including 2nd Lieut. Frank Arthur Jenns and 2nd Lieut. F. C. Ransom killed, and five other officers wounded, whilst 174 other ranks were reported killed, died of wounds, wounded or missing. The dead numbered 38 and the missing 16. Five officers and 217 other ranks joined for duty.

AMERICAN DOCTOR'S PLUCK.

On May Day the Battalion was relieved in the front line, "White City," which faced Beaumont Hamel Valley, by the 7th Norfolk and three companies marched to billets at Acheux, whilst "D" Company occupied the defences at Beaussart. Training and working parties provided the day's duty, with bathing as an occasional luxury. The Essex were in the line again, facing "Y" ravine at Beaumont Hamel, on May 5th. The main portion of the Battalion lay in a bank in which were dug-outs used during 1916. The communication trenches were very muddy. The best way to headquarters was over the top. Auchonvillers was the point of concentration for the ration and working parties and was heavily shelled each evening. The chief incident whilst there was that 2nd Lieut. A. A. Mussett took out a fighting patrol, of the strength of a platoon, to examine a German advanced post and to detect any signs of occupation. If the enemy were encountered an effort was to be made to round them up and secure prisoners. From 11 p.m. until dawn the patrol conducted an exhaustive reconnaissance, but found the post unoccupied and no trace of hostile parties. On May 11th the enemy retaliated with two patrols against a sap held by the 5th Berkshires. They were pluckily beaten back by bombing, and Sergeant Varney and another, following them up, took a wounded officer prisoner. The 9th Essex were relieved on this same day, but



At Beaumont Hamel (Lieut. A. A. Mussett in foreground).



BEAUMONT HAMEL VALLEY.

before they were clear of the front line "A" and "B" Companies sustained a number of casualties from a bombardment with fishtail bombs. Whilst at Mailly Maillet, Lieut. T. Comber, M.C., with a platoon of "C" Company, supported by another platoon of the same Company, went out on May 15th to secure identification of enemy units, but found the front line too strongly held, and so could not succeed in their object. The next day another patrol reconnoitred a path leading from an enemy sap and reported it very much used. At another portion of the line four groups of the 6th Buffs raided west of Beaumont Hamel and entered the front line, bringing back three prisoners. Raiding was very active all along the divisional front. Lieut. A. A. Mussett took a patrol out on May 17th to examine the enemy wire and to judge whether there was possibility of successfully rounding up hostile posts. He found the wire weak and reported that a successful raid could be undertaken. A platoon of "A" Company was badly affected by gas shells on May 18th, and on the same night the Battalion was in the line again, with headquarters at Station House, Auchonvillers. Patrols were sent out each night, but obtained no identification, although shots were exchanged with the enemy on one occasion. The 5th Royal Berkshires carried out a very successful raid on May 24th, the whole battalion being employed. Eight prisoners and five machine guns were captured. The Division was relieved by 17th Division and on May 26th and 27th the Essex were succeeded by the 10th West Yorkshires. During the march back along the Auchonvillers-Maillet road the Battalion was shelled and a number of gas casualties occurred in "C" Company. Lieut. C. T. McCarthy, of the U.S. Army, attached as Medical Officer to the Battalion, displayed great pluck. Finding he could not deal with the casualties satisfactorily wearing a mask, he removed it and for three hours worked strenuously, having then to be taken to hospital suffering severely from gas. "This was the worst gas shell bombardment I have ever experienced," wrote Captain Barltrop. "It started immediately we left the trench system and I shall never forget the journey down the road to Mailly Maillet. The shells literally fell as thickly as would peas taken in the hand and flung down. How any of "C" Company survived is a mystery to me. Of course, we had to wear gas masks, never a pleasant experience, but their suffocating effect was intensified by the exertion of hurrying and the strain on nerves already taut from days in a sector which was expecting mass attacks, with tanks, at any moment. Man after man was struck down and, of course, the first thing they did was to tear off their masks, with the result that they were gassed as well. We were on an open road and the target was the road and the adjoining ground, to which we had to stick because the night was pitch black. Unless we kept on, we were certain to be observed at daylight. Eventually we reached Mailly Maillet, where we

took refuge in cellars until the bombardment ceased and then marched on to our rendezvous." The 9th Essex stayed in Acheux Wood for the night, but next morning moved on to Arquèves, where training was again vigorously carried out. The casualties for the month totalled 115, including nine killed and 44 cases of gassing. Nine officers and 91 other ranks joined.

The Division did not move during the first fortnight in June, though it had been transferred to the XXII Corps in reserve to the French Army. On June 16th, however, it went back to the V Corps and proceeded to Hédauville, and by June 18th was on familiar ground again, viz., the Bouzincourt sector, by Aveluy Wood, where it held the enemy so well two months before. The 9th Essex were in reserve, with the 35th Brigade, but they were in the line again by June 23rd, when the 36th Brigade was relieved. On this same day four officers and twelve N.C.O.'s of the 106th U.S. Regiment were attached for four days' training. On the last night of the month the 37th Brigade, with the 18th Division on its right, was employed to take the remainder of the high ground of Bouzincourt Spur. The enemy counter-attacked with vigour at 8 p.m. on July 1st and succeeded in re-occupying the position. Conditions were unusual at this period inasmuch as the Battalion could send out patrols by daylight owing to the cover afforded by the foliage of Aveluy Wood. This same fact also enabled hostile trenches to be constructed and held as closely as twenty to thirty yards away. One day a patrol came across an empty German post, complete with bombs. It was clearly a trench occupied by night only and elaborate plans were laid to enter it early in the evening and surprise the enemy when he, in turn, sought to occupy it. The Essex patrols, however, walked into an ambush and nearly all became casualties, although none were killed. The enemy had watched the whole thing, guessed the intention, and exploited the opportunity to the utmost. Ten other ranks were killed in the Essex during the month, whilst 92 were admitted to hospital. One officer and 208 other ranks joined.

The Battalion went out of the line to Bouzincourt on July 5th and nine days later the Division was transferred to the XXII Corps, south of Amiens, and placed at the disposal of the First French Army (Debeney). A mobile detachment, consisting of four lorries, manned by Lewis and machine guns, was organized to give aid to any part of the line which might be threatened. A great change was coming over the situation. On July 18th Marshal Foch commenced attacking and all idea of defensive tactics was abandoned. The Battalion was at Hérissart until the 14th, when it went by 'buses through Amiens to St. Sauflieu and suffered on the 16th a loss of one killed and six wounded in a bombing raid by hostile aeroplanes. On July 20th the Divisional Artillery supported a successful attack of the 66th Chasseurs Division in the vicinity of Morcuil, their use



BOUZINCOURT.

of the smoke screen evoking high compliments from the French. The Essex were moved, with the rest of the infantry of the Division, to Havernas (one company) and Wagnies (three companies) on July 30th, and on the last day the divisional artillery came into action east of Gentelles Wood in support of the 2nd Australian Division.



AUGUST 8th AND AFTERWARDS.

The British armies scarce had breathing time from the great German onset for reorganization and refitment ere they were called upon, in concert with the French and Americans, to make the supreme effort which is known to history as "The Advance to Victory." It commenced on August 8th and continued without intermission until the Armistice on November 11th. There were minor operations during May and June, which had for their object the improvement of the British front. For the French, however, there was much more serious business afoot. During May the Germans broke through north-west of Rheims, where the Fifth and Sixth French armies included the British IX Corps. They made considerable progress until they were brought to a standstill early in June on the Aubilly-Chambrecy-Bouzacourt line. A week or two later the Germans essayed to move forward east and west of Rheims, but were firmly held by French, Americans and Italians, with the British XXII Corps in reserve. Foch struck back and in this operation the XXII Corps was employed with the French Army. On July 20th the 31st and 62nd Divisions attacked astride the Ardre River and penetrated to a depth of four miles. Then, three days later, the 15th and 34th Divisions went on south-west of Soissons, where again good work was done. The 17th French Division, later on, erected a monument to the 15th Division on the heights behind Buzancy Plateau, where they found the body of a Scottish soldier who had advanced farthest in the attack. Meanwhile, the main British armies, brought up again to a strength of 52 divisions and more formidable than before in artillery, were not idle. During July they cleared the Villers Bretonneux Plateau and took Hamel, whilst farther north there fell to them Meteren and Merris.

The success of these attacks encouraged the Allies to more ambitious efforts and, as the result of a conference, it was arranged that an offensive should be undertaken in a converging direction towards Mezieres by the French and Americans, whilst the British, moving towards St. Quentin and Cambrai, would endeavour to seize the lateral communications running through Maubeuge, Hirson and Mezieres, by which route the enemy forces in Champagne were supplied. It was anticipated that a substantial British advance in this direction would threaten the German Armies in Flanders and cause the enemy to hold on with tenacity to the Hindenburg Line and the section of his front stretching from St. Quentin to Cambrai. The Battle of Amiens, in which the First French Army co-operated with the British forces, lasted from August 8th—"the black day" for Germany, according to Ludendorff—until August 12th, and resulted in the freeing of

the French city from German grip and also the important railway system which radiated therefrom. An advance of twelve miles was made at a vital point. The Battle of Bapaume (21st August-1st September) was the next move and involved a series of actions whereby the Third and Fourth British Armies drove the Germans right across the Somme battlefield beyond Peronne and turned the line of the famous river. It led to the evacuation by the enemy of the Lys Salient. Meanwhile, the Battle of the Scarpe raged from August 26th to 3rd September, wherein British troops penetrated to a depth of three miles in particularly difficult country. Further allied combinations followed whereby the Americans attacked west of the Meuse in the direction of Mezieres, the French west of Argonne, the British on the St. Quentin-Cambrai front towards Maubeuge, and the Belgian and Allied forces up to Ghent. The Battle of Cambrai and the Hindenburg Line was waged from September 27th to October 5th and, as a result, the British, with Americans, took the Canal du Nord and broke through the Hindenburg Line. The development of the battle in Flanders forced the enemy withdrawal from Lens and Armentieres. The Second Battle of Le Cateau, from the 8th to 12th October, enabled the Allies to take the important lateral double line of railway from St. Quentin through Busigny to Cambrai. The left flank also advanced considerably and Lille was evacuated. The River Selle was forced in stormy fighting from the 17th to 25th October, the Allies knowing that the end was in sight. Turkey and Bulgaria went finally out of the conflict and the collapse of Austria followed. Then the final Battle of the Sambre, which lasted from the 1st to 11th November, with the rapid progress of the Allies elsewhere, brought the Germans to submission and to the signing of the Armistice. The results attained were summarized by Sir Douglas Haig: "In the fighting since the 1st November our troops had broken the enemy's resistance beyond possibility of recovery and forced on him a disorderly retreat along the whole front of the British Armies. Thereafter the enemy was capable neither of accepting nor refusing battle. The utter confusion of his troops, the state of his railways congested with abandoned trains, the capture of huge quantities of rolling stock and material all showed that our attack had been decisive. It had been followed on the north by the evacuation to the Tournai salient, and to the south, where the French forces had pushed forward in conjunction with us, by a rapid and costly withdrawal to the line of the Meuse. The strategic plan of the Allies had been realized with a completeness rarely seen in war. When the Armistice was signed by the enemy his defensive powers had already been definitely destroyed. A continuance of hostilities could only have meant disaster to the German Armies and the armed invasion of Germany."

For the great feat of arms of August 8th the 12th Division was in the III Corp., part of Rawlinson's Fourth Army. Two days

before the Germans had captured some positions of the 18th Division and the 36th Brigade was sent in support ; thus on the 8th the 12th Division had only two brigades in hand, the 35th and the 37th. When the 35th Brigade was moving to the assembly positions on the night of August 7th casualties were caused by gas shelling, including the commander of the brigade, Brigadier-General B. Vincent, who was temporarily succeeded by Brigadier-General A. T. Beckwith, C.M.G., D.S.O. The 18th and 58th Divisions were allotted to the main attack, which commenced at 4.30 a.m., whilst the 35th Brigade, on the right, moved two hours later so as to hurry the withdrawal of the enemy from Dernancourt, which was already in progress. It was a misty morning, rendered the more difficult of observation by the smoke screen. The Brigade advanced with the 1st Cambridgeshires on the right, 7th Norfolks in the centre and 9th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel Green) on the left, with 6th Queen's, in support, and 5th Northhamptons, in reserve (both of the 37th Brigade). All went well with the Northhamptons and Essex and they were soon in occupation of a new line stretching from Morlancourt to the Ancre. The left of the Cambridgeshires was also successful, but the right flank and the 18th Division were held up by enemy fire from the Sailly Laurette-Morlancourt road. The battalion subsequently was forced back to the starting point. Another effort was made, however, and with the aid of artillery and a tank which had lost its way, both the Cambridgeshires and the 18th Division were victorious ; two companies of the first-named, about 200 in number, taking no fewer than 316 prisoners. Another advance was planned for the 37th Brigade for the next morning, but it was postponed to 5.30 p.m., though the 6th Buffs, not having received revised orders, had already occupied the position and had to be recalled. At the later hour the 37th Brigade went forward irresistibly, all three battalions reaching their objectives. Two men of the 6th Buffs, with a Lewis gun, captured a field gun which was firing over open sights ; at another point a tank over-ran a machine gun nest and enabled the 6th Queen's to push on, whilst Sergeant Harris, of the 6th Royal West Kents, gained the Victoria Cross for rushing an enemy machine gun posted in a cornfield, killing seven men and capturing the gun. He secured a second position, but in endeavouring to take a third he was killed. The success of the 37th Brigade was completed by the 1st Cambridgeshires, who cleared Morlancourt. At 6 p.m. on August 10th the 37th Brigade was strengthened by the 9th Essex from the 35th Brigade and swept forward with the 6th Buffs on the right, the Essex in the centre and 6th Queen's on the left, and so gained, with the aid of tanks, the former front line of the Amiens defences. Meanwhile, the 36th Brigade had been doing good work with the 58th and 18th Divisions in the initial advance, seizing at one point south of Morlancourt an officer and thirty men, with three machine guns. They rejoined

the Division on August 10th and three days later they were attacking as part of the 12th Division, which in five days had moved forward 8,000 yards and captured Morlancourt. The offensive continued. The 35th Brigade was on the right, with the Cambridgeshires and 7th Norfolks in front and 9th Essex and 6th Buffs, of the 37th Brigade, in support; to the left was the 36th Brigade. Tanks and a creeping barrage were employed and by these aids the two leading battalions advanced a mile and a half and secured their objectives. When the Essex and Buffs went through the former could not pass the machine gun fire which swept the ridge by which it had to advance and they were driven back to the far side of the Bray-Méalulte road, where the 6th Royal West Kents reinforced them. The Buffs, however, were more fortunate and went on another mile and a half, so that the left of the Brigade had moved forward three miles in one day. The 36th Brigade also made a successful onslaught, including the capture of Méaulte. The high ground which had held up the Essex was the next point dealt with and there was much hard fighting by the 37th Brigade on August 23rd. They captured Bécordel, but could only secure the ridge when it had been isolated by the advance, on the right and left flanks respectively, of the 47th Division and the 36th Brigade. The retirement of the enemy was so rapid that the operations approximated to open warfare, though much hindered by mist. The advance of the Division was led by the 35th Brigade, which, in turn, was protected by the cavalry of the XXII Corps. Carnoy Ridge was secured on August 25th. Further progress was held up for a time, notwithstanding the gallant efforts of the 36th Brigade, and it was not until August 27th that the 37th Brigade gained Maricourt-Bernafay Wood and also Hardecourt-Maltzhorn Farm. Further movement was difficult, but was aided later by the continued advance of the 18th Division, which had taken Bernafay and Trones Woods. A determined effort was made to clear the way by the 12th Division on August 28th, with the 9th Royal Fusiliers on the right and 1st Cambridgeshires and 9th Essex on the left. The 9th Royal Fusiliers captured Hardecourt from the German Fusilier Guards and the 35th Brigade obtained possession of the Maltzhorn Farm Ridge, with 100 prisoners. The Germans shelled the captured positions heavily and the 1st Cambridgeshires lost their leader, Lieut.-Colonel Saint, a soldier with outstanding qualities of leadership. The Division moved on once more, for the Germans were rapidly retiring. Enemy opposition was swept away and when the Division was relieved on the morning of August 30th it had reached Le Forest, having fought its way forward over eight miles from Morlancourt. In the line again early in September on the east of the Canal du Nord and just south of Manancourt in preparation for an attack upon Nurlu, the Division advanced on the morning of September 5th, with 36th

Brigade (right) and 35th Brigade. The 7th Norfolks and 9th Essex led the latter, with the 1st Cambridgeshires in support. The advance was not as successful as had been expected. The Essex got into the enemy's front line, but could not advance beyond it. Other units also shared in hard fighting, but had little luck. However, the next day the 35th Brigade went forward with the 5th Royal Berkshires (right), 1st Cambridgeshires and 9th Essex and carried the whole of Nurlu village, seizing four guns and 100 men, part of a division which had only arrived from the Ypres salient the night before. The Corps commander (Sir A. Godley) was very gratified with this success, for he wired congratulations upon the occupation of the Ridge and the Brigade's pluck in overcoming stubborn hostile resistance. The occupation of Nurlu much facilitated the advance and the Divisional Engineers accomplished the notable feat of throwing a 45ft. span bridge over the Canal du Nord in seven hours. Early on September 7th the 37th Brigade again cleared the way, not halting until they had consolidated a line about 1,000 yards west of Epehy and Peiziere. On September 8th the Division was relieved, and the Divisional Commander opportunely reminded all ranks that since August 8th they had delivered seventeen attacks and advanced as many miles. They had captured 17 officers and 1,010 other ranks, whilst the trophies included 17 guns, 194 machine guns and 102 trench mortars. The Division's rest was only a short one, near to Manancourt, and the respite was occupied in preparing for the capture of Epehy, an outpost of the Hindenburg Line of formidable strength. The 12th Division was put against it, with the 18th Division on the right and the 58th against Peiziere. The 36th and 35th Brigades were in line, each with two battalions leading. The 36th Brigade was on the right, with the object of taking Malassise Farm, and the 35th on the left, charged with the important duty of conquering Epehy. The 37th Brigade was in support east of Guyencourt. The 36th Brigade reached the edge of Malassise Farm, but could not get farther, whilst on the left the southern end of Epehy was captured by the Norfolks and Essex, but Fisher's Keep defied their valour. With the co-operation of the 58th Division from Peiziere the Cambridgeshires went through the village and suffered heavily from enemy marksmen still hidden in the ruins. One company lost all its officers and was led through by a sergeant. This advance of the Cambridgeshires permitted the Norfolks and Essex to reach Prince Reserve. The Germans held on for some hours to the northern end of Epehy, but towards evening they retired to the north-east and at 7.45 Fisher's Keep was in our hands. The Essex pushed along and established a block 200 yards from Prince Reserve. The casualties of the 35th Brigade were severe. Next day (19th September) the 37th Brigade continued the gallant onset and seized Malassise Farm, whilst the 35th Brigade, after a temporary set-back, aided by

enterprising field artillery fire, were able to seize their objective and thus on the night of the 19th-20th September the divisional boundary extended to the right as far as the road from Ronssoy to Vendhuile. The Division pushed forward again on September 21st and the 36th and 37th Brigades cleared Little Priel Farm after fierce fighting, finding no fewer than forty machine guns in the mines. An obstinate struggle ensued for the possession of Dados Loop and vicinity. The Loop, "on the crest of one of many spurs leading to the Canal de l'Escaut, possessed command in several directions, especially over the Escaut Valley." In the attack and counter-attack which ensued a hostile movement against Braeton Post was frustrated by the pluck of Sergeant Livings, of the 9th Essex, who ran along the parapet firing his Lewis gun from the hip and causing numerous casualties. A great operation was now in contemplation, not less than the taking of the Hindenburg Line. This was set afoot on September 27th, the duty assigned to the 12th Division being to secure the vantage points up to the Canal and to protect the left flank of the 27th American Division. A renewed effort was first made against Dados Loop and other points, and the former fell to the 6th Royal West Kents. This success enabled the Canal bank to be reached. That night the Division was so reduced that it had to be withdrawn from the line. Its casualty roll since August 8th numbered not less than 6,229. On departing from the III Corps, General Butler expressed his thanks for the Division's loyal support and for the manner in which it had always "played up," whilst the Army Commander (Sir Henry Rawlinson) reminded all ranks that "a long list of successes, including Morlancourt, Carnoy, Maricourt, Hardecourt, Maurepas and Nurlu, culminating in the capture of the strongly fortified village of Epehy, constitutes a record which has seldom been equalled."

CROSSING THE CANAL DE L'ESCAUT.

The 12th Division was in the Proyart area on October 1st and the next day joined VIII Corps, of the First Army, in the Vimy Sector, with instructions to relieve the 20th Division on a front from Oppy to Eleu-dit-Leauvette on the Canal de Lens, the three brigades being in line on a frontage of 11,000 yards. This was no resting place, for the enemy were withdrawing, and that same night patrols of the 36th Brigade were in Mericourt. On October 10th the 35th Brigade was in Bois Bernard and subsequently reached Drocourt, occupying the Queant-Drocourt line, whilst the 36th Brigade entered Rouvroy, after some fighting, and the 37th Brigade seized Billy-Montigny and Noyelles. By the evening of October 11th the whole of the Division was in the Queant-Drocourt line. The pursuit was relentless. The 35th Brigade reached Courcelles, where the 9th Essex were conspicuous, particularly the platoon leadership of Sergeant Baum. Patrols reached the Canal de la

Haute Deule, but found the enemy wishing to contest their passage, whilst the 1st Cambridgeshires came against opposition at Aubry. The 86th Brigade occupied Henin Liétard on October 12th and reached Basse Noyelles and Noyelles Godault. The canal banks were secured, together with the railway crossing at Pont à Sault. In concert with the 8th Division, the Division made an attack on Aubry in the early morning of October 14th, in which the village was entered by the Cambridgeshires and Norfolks. The 7th Royal Sussex succeeded in crossing the canal by means of a small floating bridge, made of trench boards, fastened on cork, which caused the Germans to finally evacuate Aubry and the canal. The enemy were in full retreat. The 87th Brigade relieved the 86th Brigade and reached La Placette, where German cavalry patrols were seen, one of which charged a party of the Royal West Kents. Flines and Boujon were entered and the enemy rearguards were found posted at Crupez, Sauvagerie and Hem. The 35th Brigade, with the 6th Buffs and 9th Essex in front, went through Orchies, where "a French veteran of 1870, who had strongly resented four years of German domination in his home, prepared to greet the advancing Allies with a present of vegetables from his garden. Whilst collecting them he came between two opposing patrols and received a wound to which he succumbed. The old chap declared that he was proud to die. It was fitting, he considered, only having been wounded in 1870, that he should have the opportunity to die for his country in 1918." The character of the advance at this stage is illustrated by a humorous incident. The "supporting" companies were played through Orchies by the "Drums." Thus was the town occupied. The "leading" companies had been advancing in extended order across country and owing to their slower rate of progress the support companies had unknowingly got in front. The Brigades pressed on and the 37th Brigade reached the Scarpe, across which troops were ferried upon small rafts made by lashing planks and three barrels together, only to discover that the land from the Scarpe to the Canal de l'Escaut was flooded. The 35th Brigade was succeeded by the 36th Brigade and in the fighting which ensued at Maroc the Division lost Lieut.-Colonel W. R. A. Dawson, of the Royal West Kents. He was wounded for the seventh time, the last time fatally. He was a most intrepid battalion leader and had the distinction of wearing three bars to his D.S.O. Bruille was taken by the 6th Buffs with great dash and Chateau l'Abbaye fell to the 7th Royal Sussex. A cork bridge was thrown over the Canal de l'Escaut, after an attempt to establish a bridgehead by the 36th Brigade had failed. This was the last fight for the Division in the great war, for on October 29th, the 156th Brigade of the 52nd Division relieved the 36th Brigade, which was leading, and the whole Division was withdrawn.

During the period immediately following the Armistice the

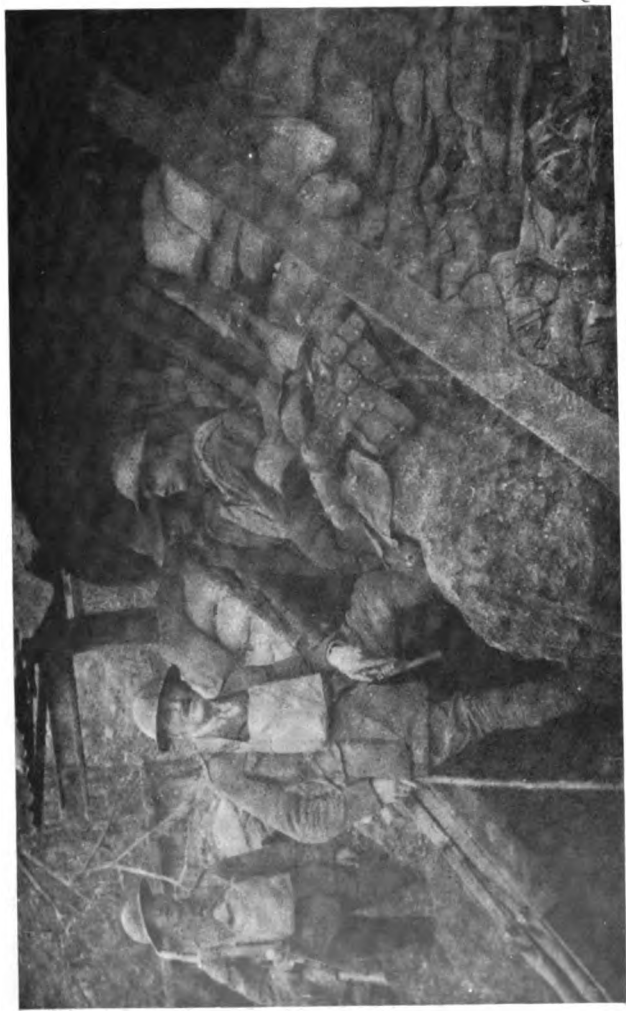
Division was billeted east of Douai, with headquarters at Masny, a mining district, and there the days were passed with sport, entertainment and salvage. The Divisional football cup was won by the 9th Essex, who beat the 9th Royal Berkshires by 3—1. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales spent two days with the Division on 4th and 5th February, 1919, during which he presented Colours to the Service Battalions. Those of the 85th Brigade were handed over at Somain on February 4th, the 9th Essex being commanded by Lieut.-Colonel H. M. B. de Sales la Terriere, M.C. The 6th Royal West Kents joined the 84th Division, afterwards known as the Eastern Division, on the Rhine, and the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Douglas Haig) visited divisional headquarters on March 18th to say good-bye. The departure of the commander (Major-General Higginson) for the Army of Occupation followed on March 16th, and within a few weeks the Division had ceased to exist.

LAST MONTHS OF THE WAR.

Now for the last great fighting phase of the 9th Essex. On August 1st the Battalion rested at Wargnies and reconnoitred a new line astride the Ancre in front of Dernancourt. The next day the Battalion embussed on Canaples-Haveenas road and disembarked at a point on the Behencourt-Baizieux road, bivouacking at Round Wood. That night the Essex relieved the 2/2nd London (58th Division), lying along the Ancre, and detected signs of enemy withdrawal to the left bank on August 3rd. Battle patrols pushed forward without establishing contact and the enemy's front trench system was occupied. Dernancourt was also found to have been evacuated and advanced posts were established there. Patrolling continued on the night of August 4th-5th, with contact maintained on the front of the right company in their original position on the left bank of the Ancre. "A" Company on the right bank of the Ancre endeavoured to push forward, but found the enemy vigilant and active. On two successive nights 2nd Lieut. Best took a platoon over to take an apparently unoccupied post, only to find it wasn't! Then, too, the high ground above Morlancourt gave plenty of scope for hostile sniping, when daylight patrols were reconnoitring the swamp and scrub of the Ancre. Slight shelling during the evening was followed the next day by a tornado of gas shells and high explosive on the back areas. The attack of the 1st Division on the right obtained a footing in the enemy front system, as a result of which the Battalion sideslipped to the right, leaving only a reserve company and battalion headquarters on the right bank of the river. The Essex prepared for the attack during August 7th and the next day they went over at 6.20 a.m., with "C" "B" and "D" Companies in front and "A" Company in reserve; 7th Norfolks were on the right. They crossed the valley to the high ground

opposite their position to the left of Morlancourt and seized the Ville Morlancourt road.¹ Patrols were sent out to the near top of the ridge, but further advance was held up by a strong point on the crest, though forward platoon posts were established on the railway loop some 200-300 yards east of the objective. The Battalion was the left pivot of the offensive, which extended as far south as Montdidier. "The objective," wrote Captain Macey, "lay across our front line down a sharp valley and up the other side across the Ville-Morlancourt road, including a huge old chalk pit in the embankment. The morning was very misty and the attackers were soon among the Boches, who relied very largely on hand grenades. There were few casualties, although the enemy gave much trouble from the railway east of the road, which they still held. The strong point with which Lieut. Best had been specially concerned was also obstinately defended, although quite isolated. 'A' Company, as reserve, were in course of forming up to clear up the situation, when a bigger attack developed in rear by the Brigade in reserve and the positions previously mentioned were finally captured." A tank which had wandered into the area from farther south was sent up to us to clear Morlancourt, with orders that two platoons were to follow it. Lieut. Wardall was to ride in the tank to direct it. Later orders cancelling the movement arrived in time to stop the platoons, but not the tank, in which Lieut. Wardall had an exciting trip round the village, which nearly ended disastrously, but of which he had many amusing stories to tell afterwards. The 37th Brigade passed through on August 9th and over-ran the strong post on the ridge with the aid of tanks, mopping up Morlancourt and reaching objectives in the old Amiens defences, except at two points to which the enemy clung tenaciously. "B," "C" and "D" Companies were lent to the 37th Brigade on August 10th to capture these strong posts, which were taken, although the ground was swept by machine gun fire, and the three companies relieved by the 7th Royal Sussex. The losses in the two days' fighting included two officers (Lieut. William Guest Hartley and Lieut. Bernard St. George Perkins) and 19 other ranks killed and six officers and 178 other ranks wounded. The relief was not an easy matter, for there was some difficulty in convincing Brigade headquarters that the objectives were in hand. The delay caused the move to be undertaken in daylight and the Essex companies were not long in reaching Morlancourt, for there were no communication trenches to traverse.

1. "On visiting this place in 1925," wrote Lieut.-Colonel G. Green, "I found a granite block stating that 'The enemy was repulsed from here by the — Battalion, U.S.A.' (*sic*). There was such a battalion in the area soon after we took our objective; they were occupying our old assembly trenches. I was ordered by the brigadier to send them back, as they had got there by mistake. They went back, but it is they, I suppose, who have their name recorded in granite instead of the 9th Essex."



LIEUT.-COL. W. RUSSELL JOHNSON.



*X.Y. The 9th Essex objective August 8th, 1918 : the road from X to Morlancourt, A.B.C.D., assembly trenches, Objective was taken and patrols pushed up to points * on the railway and posts established there.*

"This was a typical minor operation," wrote Lieut.-Colonel G. Green, "often more troublesome than a big attack. Telephone message, 'A car will be at XY at Z p.m. for C.O. 9th Essex.' Just time to get into kit and get there. A dash to Brigade headquarters. Orders as to assembly and line of attack, given in five minutes, included a convenient wood as right line of direction, shown on inaccurate map. Dash back and summon company commanders to point of assembly to see the ground—two or three miles over rough country. No wood to be seen for miles around! Bearings are taken and objectives arranged just in time to get back and bring up troops. The attack is launched and headquarters taken up at the only 'lone tree' in sight to await reports. No information for hours except scraps gleaned from returning wounded and what can be made out with field glasses till darkness intervenes. Among this all the M.O. (Captain Joseph) is seen carrying a wounded man on his shoulders close up to the fighting area. Finally Captain Macey volunteers to go up and get information and arrange relief. Relieving troops arrive just before dawn and our remaining men return for a well-earned rest."

ADVANCING FROM MORLANCOURT.

The Battalion remained near Mericourt for some days. During this period the forward positions were reconnoitred and junior officers were given the task of learning routes across country in order to guide tanks at night. During one of these excursions an Essex officer found a wounded man who evidently was not British and who failed to respond to French and even German. This caused the officer to turn to his runner and tell him to leave the man until the stretcher-bearers fetched him, which caused the unknown, who proved to be a Bavarian, to galvanize into life and reply in good English, "I'll be — well dead by then." Then, on August 19th, the Battalion relieved the 1st Cambridgeshire in front of Morlancourt, where on August 22nd the Battalion went over the top at 4.40 a.m. in support of the Norfolks and Cambridgeshires. When the first objective had been taken, the Essex passed through and took the second objective north-east of Pear Tree Hill, nearly a thousand yards east of the Meaulte-Bray road, experiencing much sniping and machine gun fire. At night the Battalion moved back to Morlancourt on relief by the 36th Brigade. The losses were severe. Six officers were killed (Captain M. B. Robertson, M.C., Lieut. A. M. Bailey, 2nd Lieutenants Robert Newlyn S. Handley, J. A. Bennett, C. E. Longhurst and H. R. Foxon). The casualties among the other ranks totalled 120. That same day Lieut.-Colonel G. Green, M.C., was "gassed" and went to hospital. He was succeeded in temporary command by Major W. Russell-Johnson.

"It was a misty morning," said Lieut.-Colonel Green, "and

no landmark was available to direct us to our objective. We had, therefore, to march on a compass bearing. This necessitated the removal of the gas mask at intervals. The enemy added considerably to the mist by firing gas shells of different kinds on our assembly ground and lines of approach. He had evidently heard details of our intention, which is not surprising, as we had a staff officer from another division in battalion headquarters the night before to arrange for keeping touch with the battalion on our right. He asked to use our telephone to speak to his headquarters. On going into the signallers' dug-out soon after I found him giving details of our dispositions in a loud voice. The enemy had, of course, no difficulty in picking up his information. The conversation was quickly brought to a close and we did not part on very friendly terms. Had I not gone into hospital the following day he would probably have heard more about the matter."

The Battalion started in rear of the Cambridgeshires at 4.30 a.m., in artillery formation and ran into hostile fire whilst crossing the old front line, which had been taken by the three companies on August 10th, and there it was 2nd Lieut. S. Handley was killed. It was almost dark and very misty and soon touch had been lost on the right. The attack, however, appeared to be developing nicely, the tanks making headway, whilst the Battalion was following close behind the creeping barrage. Immediately after crossing the Bray-Meaulte road the Battalion ran into much trouble and heavy machine gun fire. The sun was up, the mist had cleared and the 9th Essex were below the high ground around Becordel. "D" Company (Wheeler), on the left, entered their objective and "B," in the centre, gained a culvert, but "A," on the right, were caught in a level field of stubble, devoid of protection. No further advance was possible and the troops endeavoured to make what cover they could with their entrenching tools. Captain Robertson was hit again and again, whilst his runner, Private Small, made valiant efforts to find cover for him. Here Lieut. Bailey was also killed. It was a most trying day, the men being hit one after another. One officer who tried to get touch on the right found three Germans crawling across his path, but could not hit them with his revolver at forty paces. Those men who crawled about trying to improve the position by discovering a shellhole found themselves even worse off. Sergeant Wright, one of the most gallant in that day's action, was killed in that way. At dusk "B" and "A" Companies were withdrawn to the road and later were sent to the Dernancourt-Etinchem road. Thus "D" Company alone maintained its position.

On August 24th the 36th and 37th Brigades again attacked and advanced east of Mametz, with the 35th Brigade in support. The rapidity of movement was such that when the men heard the sound of transport they took it to be that of the enemy,

but found that it belonged to the Battalion, for it was keeping right up with them.

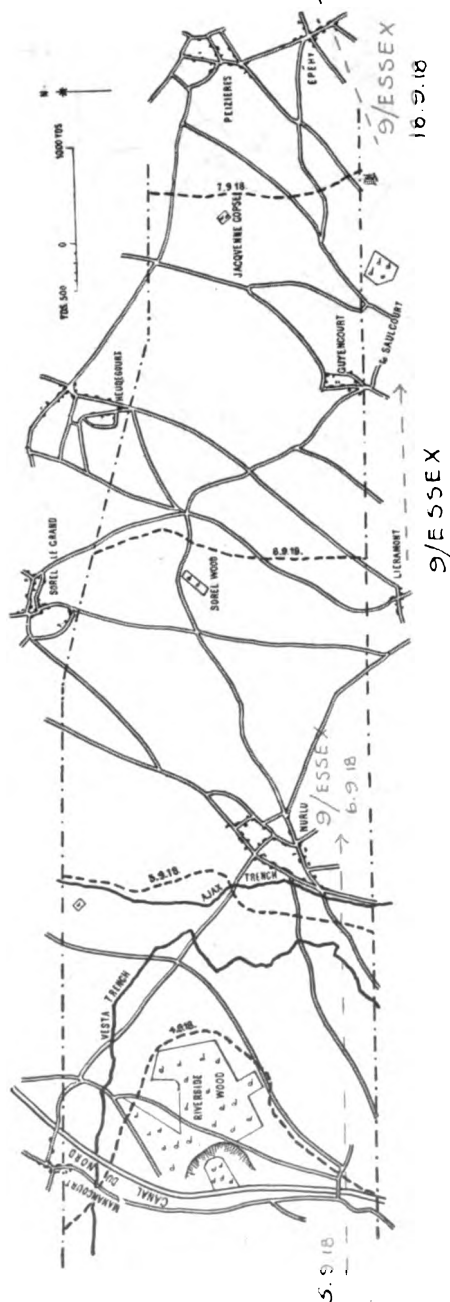
The 9th Essex were the leading battalion of the Brigade. "Russell-Johnson, the commanding officer," wrote Captain Macey, "loved doing the thing well and ordered company commanders to lead the advance on their chargers. We did so for about fifty yards, when, owing to the chargers' loathing for barbed wire and two particularly nasty shells, they were sent back again, only too thankfully, by the company commanders. The Division's advance was held up round about Carnoy. Battalion headquarters were established under a waterproof sheet and it was there that the commanding officer joined four maps together. With his torch he showed me Carnoy at the junction of the four and said that 'A' Company were to occupy it. Rations and transport having just arrived, the last man had to carry a huge sack of socks. The night was black and all 'A' Company found was a lot of promiscuous shelling, broken trenches and rain. No Carnoy, although it was only about a thousand yards in front. At last I saw a light flicker and thought I had found something in the nature of Boche and Carnoy, but it was an artillery F.O.A. station, whose information was very vague. Direction had quite gone, till suddenly there was another glimmer. Questions! Russell-Johnson under his water proof sheet!! We had made a real circular tour. The C.O. was too tired to say much, but kindly let me have the maps for another 'squint.' Off we went again, the sock man so tired that he was only able to say 'Bother,' or words to that effect. Unfortunately, it was now getting light and whereas we could now find Carnoy, the Boche found us, too. Not fancying leading one company there—myself sole officer, one sergeant, three corporals and about fifty tired men, I went off with a patrol of six to ascertain how it was held and came back to report to the C.O., but it was two hours later before "A" Company managed to filter enough troops in to justify me in saying that I was in possession. The poor man with the socks, however, was killed."

"A" and "C" Companies of the Essex, strengthened by a draft of young soldiers and a few officers, were in line west and north of Carnoy on August 25th, with two companies of the 36th Brigade in support. Fighting involved the 36th and 37th Brigades for the next two days and then on August 28th the Battalion went over again at 4.45 a.m. from the Maricourt-Montauban road and captured all objectives. They included Maltzhorn Farm Ridge, which was taken with a hundred prisoners. Patrols were then pushed forward to Oakhanger Wood on the 29th. In the afternoon the 37th Brigade passed through and advanced the line. The Battalion returned to the Montauban area for a rest on August 30th.

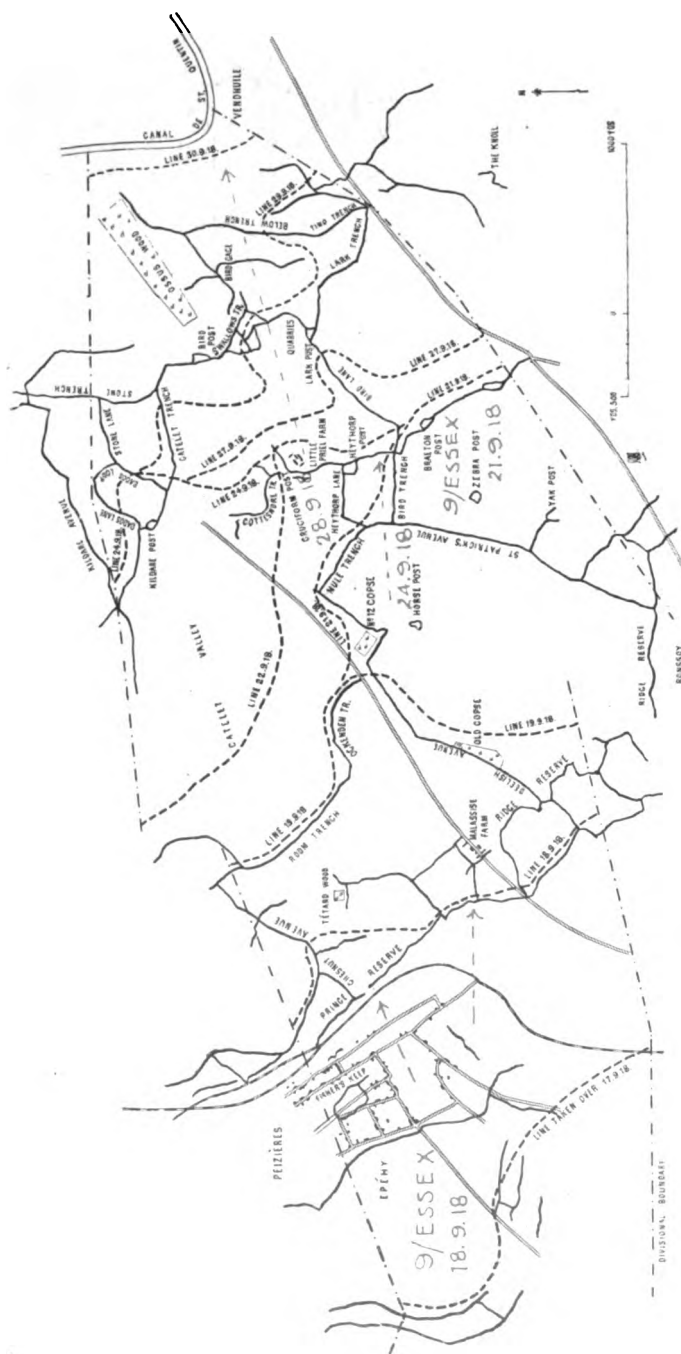
This last attack in August found the personnel very much exhausted and it was difficult to keep the men awake. It was

quite a local action. The enemy had held out on the high ground east of Maricourt-Montauban road and to secure it the Battalion had to advance through some brickfields and then across the valley. Immediately the advance started huge crimson flares were put up by the enemy, informing his artillery of the limits of the attack, whilst from the high ground tracer bullets were fired. From darkness the 9th Essex seemed to have come into day, but by following hard behind the British barrage the men were able to escape the hostile guns. It was arranged that the companies should wait until fifteen minutes after the barrage started, but it was agreed that there should be no delay and the decision to push on proved correct—a triumph for the company commanders, who were all second lieutenants. Wheeler, of "D" Company, had a particularly successful day, as he destroyed a machine gun crew lying in view with his revolver. When the objective had been attained "A" Company were ordered to get connection with the 10th Essex on the left in Bernafay Wood and succeeded in establishing some isolated posts across the valley. The positions were heavily shelled at night and a counter-attack was expected. It did not develop, whereupon patrols were sent out, but failed to locate the enemy. Evidently they were again withdrawing and this proved to be the case when the 37th Brigade attacked again on August 29th, with the 9th Essex in support. The right company ("D") advanced so rapidly that it became part of the fighting line in front of Combles. The Battalion settled down for the night in Falfimont Farm. "I remember," wrote Captain Macey, "one of our new officers, hearing we were going to a farm, was very hopeful of getting some eggs and milk. He was disappointed when it took quite a long time to find one twisted iron girder, which we finally decided was the farm. We were withdrawn about four miles to the position we had captured near brickfields and among the night's orders was one for the band to play on the green from 6-7 p.m. Everybody, however, was much too fatigued to appreciate the music, which suffered because the greater part of the band had been used as stretcher bearers. On the night of August 28th my Company ('A') was reduced to one officer (myself, 2nd Lieut.), one sergeant (Rogers, D.C.M.), one lance-corporal and about 40 men, but we were augmented by a draft of about 60, all young boys without N.C.O.'s. Our relief was timely, as the responsibility of shepherding them through continuous attacks was very great indeed. After August 22nd I think I am right in saying I was the only officer in that company. I was certainly so by the 28th, after which I was sent to Paris Plage for a week in company with one of the Cambridgeshires' officers, who was killed on the day of his return."

"C" Company had an unpleasant experience. Their only officer, Lieut. Kay, was wounded in the previous attack and two newly-joined officers were posted for this advance. One



Advance of Division from Sept. 4th to Sept. 7th, 1918, including the Capture of Nertu.



Successive Stages of Advance of Division from Sept. 17th to Sept. 30th, 1918, including the Capture of Epény.

was wounded soon after the start, so that only one was left. The company lost touch with the Battalion. When it did reach troops in action it was ascertained they were Essex, but upon taking up position with them it was found they were the 10th Essex, of the 18th Division. Runners were despatched to find the Battalion, which was later discovered to the left rear in reserve and quite comfortable.

September opened with the Battalion still in the Montauban area and then it had orders to relieve the 10th Essex, of the 18th Division, which was holding part of the line east of the Canal du Nord. The exchange was accomplished on September 4th, the 9th Essex moving by 'buses by way of Montauban, Guillemont, Combes, Frégicourt and the cross-roads of Saily-Saillisel, where they debussed and had tea. Whilst in the act of relief, the Battalion had orders that it was to attack in the morning. The commanding officer held a midnight conference and at 2 a.m. on September 5th the companies moved off to assembly positions east of the Canal du Nord. "C" Company, in front, entered and remained in the first objective, but the attack on the right had not succeeded and "A" and "D" Companies were unable to pass through. "C" Company's position was enfiladed with machine gun fire from the high ground to the north and numerous casualties were sustained. Then, too, a bombing attack was made upon them, but still they held on. Shelling by guns of all calibres smote the companies, but the Essex stuck to it and passed a quiet night save for gas shelling of the forward area. At 8 a.m. on September 6th the Battalion (right) moved against the high ground north of Nurlu in conjunction with the 21st Division and "C," "D" and "A" Companies took the trenches assigned to them. They had to pass through two belts of wire, each about thirty yards thick. This obstacle delayed movement and many casualties were sustained. The Essex pushed out strong patrols and located the enemy on the high ground west of Heudicourt, which position the 37th Brigade attacked on September 7th. The next day the Division went into Corps reserve and the 9th Essex were put into trenches east of the Canal du Nord and south-east of Manancourt.

THE STORY OF NURLU.

These opening days of September provided some of the most thrilling and successful fighting of the war for the Battalion. The men crossed the Canal du Nord by a narrow footbridge under cover of darkness on the night of September 4th-5th and commenced the advance in artillery formation at 6.45 on September 5th. When they got on to the high ground they came under heavy cross machine gun-fire from the heights across the next valley. Formation consequently became more and more difficult to maintain, for it was a long advance, covering between

a thousand and two thousand yards. Direction, too, was not easy to keep. The companies tended to get broken up into little parties and they eventually reached the objective in dribblets. By reason of these circumstances and the enemy strength on the farther ridge, the 9th Essex could not gain more than a footing. The remnants of "C" Company reached the line allotted to them (Faucon Trench), but "A" and "D" were unable, as was intended, to press forward to the next line. Captain Barltrop, who was in charge of the operation, was ordered to reorganize the companies, with two in Faucon Trench and one in support, with a defensive flank to the left. These dispositions could not be made until darkness gave cover and then "A" and "D" Companies moved to the front and "C" went into support. The difficulties of holding the line were very considerable and not the least was that of obtaining even a small supply of water, which had to be carried forward in tins. Later on those in front were cheered with the news that Brigade and Battalion had done well and had certainly saved the situation on the flank. Rations, water, bombs and ammunition arrived by dribblets, together with the information that machine guns had been placed in support, so relieving anxiety in case of a counter-attack. The enemy endeavoured to punch the companies out by bombing attacks on both flanks, but their lack of strength might have been due to the fact that they were merely seeking to know where the Essex were. The security of the right flank was the more in doubt owing to short range shell and machine gun-fire, aided by the fact that a hostile machine gun had been taken through the wire and enfiladed the position. Effective reply was not available owing to the scarcity of bombs and discharger cups. A thunderstorm in the afternoon gave an unexpected, though small, supply of water, which was eagerly caught in the ground sheets. Later in the day orders came to attack again at 8 a.m. next day (6th). Captain Barltrop represented that officers and men were in a very fatigued condition. They fell asleep whilst they talked to each other, though they were still suffering from lack of water and the strain of the day's advance. Moreover, no support was to be expected from the flanks and the enemy were believed to be holding tenaciously to their line in some strength. Orders came back, however, that the attack had to be undertaken and Captain Barltrop made his dispositions accordingly. It transpired later that Brigade headquarters were under the impression that the 9th Essex had been driven out of Faucon Trench, which was, of course, not the case. The reason for the insistence upon the attack was, however, the need for affording support to the Cambridgeshires, who had been ordered to take Nurlu village. The only hope, in Captain Barltrop's opinion, lay in a frontal holding attack on the right flank from the support line; the Germans had withdrawn on the left. If this could be achieved, there was then less possibility of the enemy firing into their backs



Belt of Wire which was passed in attack of Sept. 5th, 1918 (Capt. Barltrop and Lieut. Barrett in foreground).



MERICOURT ROAD, 1918.

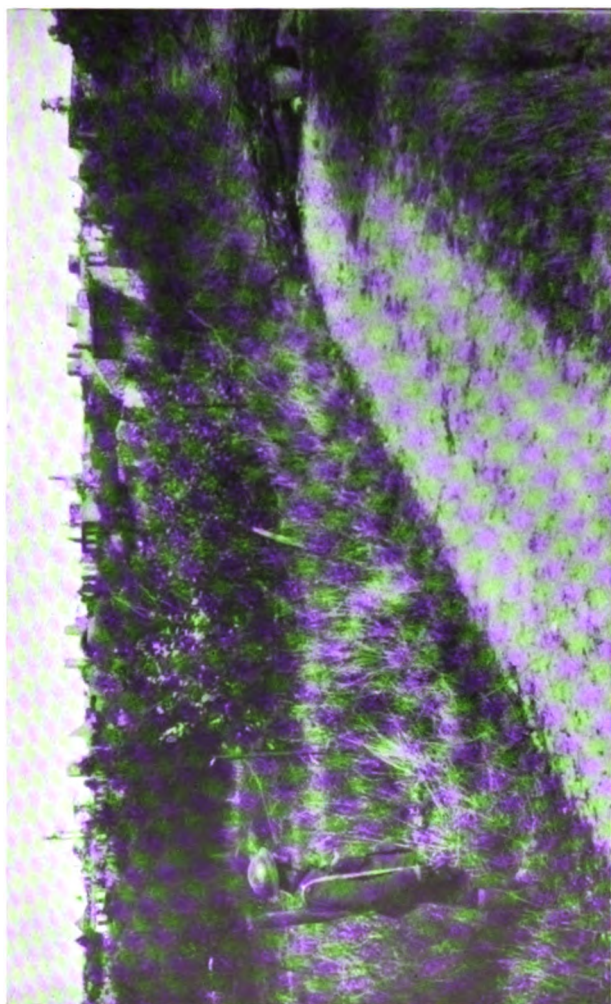
as they went on to the next line. Amazing as it may seem, the three companies achieved the apparently impossible. The frontal attack was made by "C" Company (Lieut. Mussett), whilst the other two companies moved half right in conjunction therewith. The first-named company swept victoriously through belts of wire and punished the enemy severely, whilst "A" and "D" Companies (with Lieut. Tom Comber well in front) rushed across the valley. The enemy were driven out, being probably taken by surprise as the companies went over with the opening of the guns. The Cambridgeshires on the right were equally successful. It was a really fine feat of arms. The following is Captain Barltrop's story of that day: "After the second attack on the trench system we pushed out patrols to the top of the ridge and captured a number of prisoners from machine gun pits. We had no trouble from the left flank, as it was obvious that the enemy had retired therefrom. In fact, looking back, I suppose the action was nothing more than that of a strong rearguard, but the position was stubbornly contested, for Nurlu stood on a commanding height. I should add that the actual taking of the village was the job of the Cambridgeshires and they were completely successful. This time our artillery were of more assistance. I saw an unusual sight—a German trench mortar team of about six men completely knocked out by shrapnel—all dead and scarcely bearing evidence of their wounds; there they sat or lay as if they had been suddenly frozen. I lost the excellent C.S.M. of 'C' Company (C.S.M. Moore) with the original advance. For the men of my company I have nothing but praise. I was awarded the D.S.O., but I have to thank the men for it. Tom Comber and Joe Mussett (subalterns) came to me on return from leave or training courses in the middle of the night of 5th-6th September, when I was in the depths of despair at the order to attack again, as it seemed inevitable annihilation to me. Those two men were like the strongest wine. I knew them for tried and brave fellows and they cheered and encouraged me in a way I shall never forget. It is remarkable how near victory and defeat can be to one another. During the afternoon of the 5th, when we had but a precarious hold on the enemy's line and there was no retreat except under a murderous fire, it seemed very near to surrender and defeat, as we were harassed on both flanks, had been heavily shelled and the enemy were advancing in open order about a thousand yards away. They stopped, however, at the trench system and to this day I marvel why they did not come on and wipe us out. Either it was pure demonstration or they would not face our fire. But had they come on in sufficient numbers they would have certainly overwhelmed us." The Essex losses that day included two officers, 2nd Lieut. Darricott and 2nd Lieut. Slaughter. The former was ordered to make a block and stop the enemy advance by bombing. He was killed whilst so doing, but the position

was secured. 2nd Lieut. Slaughter was killed in a curious, almost accidental, manner. British aeroplanes were dropping ammunition supplies to the forward positions and Slaughter had left his trench to collect some from the open. There was little firing then, but, unluckily, an isolated heavy shell fell just where he was collecting the ammunition and he was slain.

FALL OF EPEHY.

Training and refitting were conducted with the knowledge that a further attack was in contemplation, none other than the taking of Epehy, an outpost of the Hindenburg Line. The Battalion was addressed by the commanding officer prior to marching off. It passed through Nurlu and Liéramont to a point 500 yards east of the latter village on the Villers Faucon road, where the men rested and had tea. At midnight on September 17th-18th the Battalion trekked across country south of Saulcourt and whilst so engaged the Essex suffered a tragic misfortune in that a large shell fell into the rear of "A" Company and killed and wounded the headquarters personnel. At 2.15 a.m. on September 18th the Essex were at the positions south-west of Epehy, assembling on a tape laid ahead of the front line held by the 7th Londons. At 5.20 a.m. the Battalion advanced in two waves, "C" (Mussett) and "D" (Comber) Companies (right) leading and "A" (Macey) and "B" (Thirsk) in the rear, with sections in artillery formation. The 7th Norfolks were on the right and the 1st Cambridgeshires were responsible for mopping-up Epehy when the other battalions had passed through. Owing to the darkness and mist direction was not maintained, but good progress was made to the railway east of Epehy, where many casualties were sustained by enfilade fire from isolated machine gun posts. This notwithstanding, the Battalion finally took Vaughan's Bank in the afternoon and the 37th Brigade then passed through to take the trenches east of Malassise Farm. "Epehy should have been known to the 9th Essex," wrote Captain Macey, "as being the last village in which the Battalion was billeted before the Cambrai battle, when we attacked around Gonnelleu. Memories are misty, however, and everything seemed different. The conditions for the attack seemed very unfavourable. The starting positions were difficult to find, marked by tapes in places not destroyed by shellfire, and a heavy mist, gas shelling and black night were very discommoding. Moreover, one platoon of 'A' Company was almost wiped out by a direct hit by a shell whilst getting into position. The attack began at 4 a.m. and the fog soon rendered direction difficult. The men were quickly floundering in barbed wire, broken trenches and the remains of a tall rope mesh that the enemy had erected to prevent observation. Casualties were heavy and the attack showed signs of wavering, but with the dawn the fog lifted and the advance went strongly forward. The Essex pushed through





ENTRANCE TO EPEHY.



VAUGHAN'S BANK.

the village, and across the railway to the points beyond. Parties of the enemy were still left in the village and they caused a lot of trouble, but were later cleared out by companies of a Pioneer Battalion." "The front was uncannily quiet," wrote Mr. F. Knight. "We had no knowledge (that is, the rank and file) of the line of our objective or even the general direction of the German position, and rested in patience and quietness for our time. Rain fell heavily and 'C' Company headquarters, to which I was attached as company runner, sheltered in a covered-in gunpit. We attacked with the barrage, moving steadily forward. We met none of the enemy, but encountered heavy machine gun-fire. Company headquarters and one platoon of 'C' attained their objective, which was the German line just in front of Epehy. The other platoons had gone on by mistake with the rest of the Battalion into the village itself, where they suffered heavy casualties. Our own position was bad and several men were hit by enfilade machine gun-fire when traversing a sunken road leading down to Epehy. All day the position was vague. Enemy machine guns were active and it seemed that little progress had been made. In the afternoon we moved forward half-right, over the railway, making a dash under withering machine gun-fire across an open field to a sunken road (Prince Reserve), where we joined the rest of the Battalion. Chestnut Avenue, on the left of Prince Reserve, was entered and a block established about 250 yards down. There we counted our losses, which were heavy."

For the next two days the Battalion remained at Vaughan's Bank in support to the 5th Northants and the 1st Cambridgeshires, suffering much from shellfire. On the evening of September 21st the Battalion left Vaughan's Bank at 8.15 p.m. and took up positions as follow: "B" Company, Tombois Lane to Braeton Post; "D" Company, Braeton Post to Heythorp Post; "A" Company, Heythorp Post to Cruciform Post, with "C" Company in reserve. On the left was the 36th Brigade and on the right, International Post, held by the 13th Division. At 11 a.m. on September 23rd an intense barrage was put down under cover of which the enemy attacked in the vicinity of Little Priel Farm, but he was repulsed and retaliated during the night with gas shells of the blue cross and mustard variety. The hostile attack was again renewed in the vicinity of Heythorp Post and Little Priel Farm. A battalion of the 3rd (German) Guards Division entered the Essex trenches between these posts, but Sergeant Livings, of "A" Company, with two or three men and a Lewis gun, which he fired from the hip, smartly ejected them, causing many casualties. The new line, past the village, was disconnected and weakly held, and when the counter-attack developed the Germans over-ran it. Captain Thirsk ("B" Company) was badly wounded in the ankle and had to be left, but when the enemy were pushed out again that officer was found still there, newly

bandaged, with cigarettes and food, but minus watch and revolver. It was in this counter-attack that Captain Turner Comber, M.C., commanding "C" Company, was killed by shellfire at company headquarters and 2nd Lieut. Banks was wounded and left in a shellhole over the thrice fought ground for a couple of days before he was brought in. The Battalion went into reserve at Vaughan's Bank on September 25th, but the rest was not long, for on September 28th the Battalion supported the 5th Buffs in another attack. For this purpose they left at 8 a.m. and moved forward to the vicinity of New Copse, with battalion headquarters in Mule Trench, "A" Company being at the immediate disposal of the Buffs. It was on this occasion that the Essex men first saw United States infantry in action. The effort of the Buffs came to an end at the foot of rising ground, where a chalk pit was held, but not securely. The Battalion, which was in support, watched the bombing around the pit and supported the Buffs by machine gun fire, the effect of which could be distinctly seen on the German bombing parties. In the evening "A" Company (Whaley) was sent up to clear the ground above the quarry and in particular to secure a strong point known as "The Birdcage," some yards beyond the quarry. The location of the point was impossible at night because of the tangle of disconnected trenches, but at dawn two detachments were formed, each under 2nd Lieut. Cocks and 2nd Lieut. Salkeld, with a central section retained by the company commander. Those gradually worked towards the point, when at a given signal it was rushed, but the place was found to be only lightly held, the artillery fire of the previous day having caused heavy casualties. Three prisoners were sent back and six machine guns were seized. Strong patrols were immediately pushed forward and occupied positions overlooking the River Escaut and the village of Vendhuile. The enemy were evidently anxious to make good the crossing of the river, where, beyond, they were occupying shell-holes. A message to the artillery met a prompt response and shrapnel fire caused the Germans on the opposite bank many casualties and much confusion. The rest of the Battalion did not come up in line, "A" Company remaining as an outpost company until the following day, when the attack was renewed by fresh troops. Later in the day the Essex were withdrawn to Vaughan's Bank, where, after a short rest, they marched off via Epehy and Saulcourt in pouring rain and had tea at a point south-west of Heudecourt. The casualties for September were 16 officers and 340 other ranks. The officers killed included Captain Turner Comber, M.C., and 2nd Lieut. John Andrew Hackett Wilson. The extent of the losses may be gauged from the fact that of "C" Company headquarters staff only the O.C., Lieut. Mussett, the C.S.M. and a Company runner were left. The O.C.'s batman and the officers' cook had been severely wounded by enfilade machine gun-fire, the C.S.M.'s batman and

company clerk had been wounded whilst crossing to Prince Reserve and the other runner was wounded by a shell.

THE LAST FIGHT.

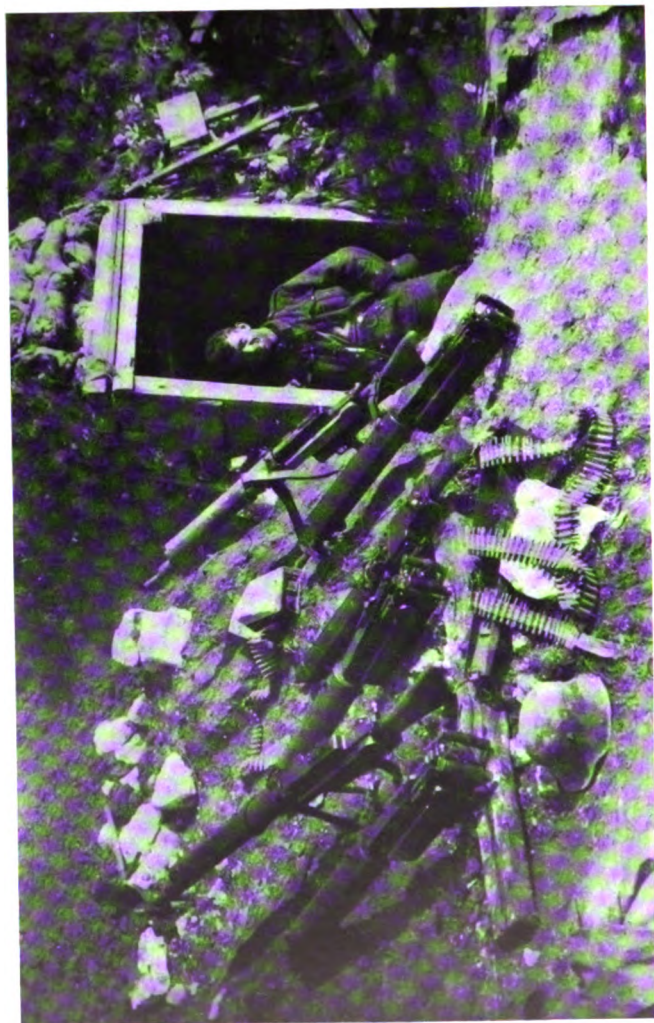
October 1st found the 9th Essex *en route* for Villers au Bois, near Aubigny, which was reached on the 3rd and two days later the Battalion was at Willerval in Brigade reserve. The enemy commenced evacuating their forward posts on October 7th and though the first influence of the retrograde movement was not felt by the Essex, they went forward on October 9th to a trench system 500 yards west of Chez Bontemps and the next night were billeted in Drocourt. On October 11th the Battalion passed through the Cambridgeshires and Norfolks by way of the Drocourt-Queant line, meeting no resistance. Outposts were established round eastern and southern edges of Henin Liétard. The next day (October 12th) the 9th Essex attacked Courcelles and met with considerable resistance. This was the occasion of what became known as "Langley's Cavalry Patrol." The advance was at first quietly undertaken in artillery formation, with "C" Company in reserve. Lieut. Langley was given the honourable position of "the point" of the vanguard until contact with the enemy should be established. For the occasion he was mounted on an artillery officer's charger and was given an escort of half a dozen mounted artillerymen. There is a subtle difference in the horsemanship required to sit such a charger and that needed to manage an ordinary infantry officer's "nag," and Lieut. Langley was soon to appreciate this difference, when mounted on a huge yellow beast. After going about 500 yards "the point" achieved success. It located the enemy in the form of a machine gun nest at about one hundred yards. A few of the horses were hit, the artillerymen quickly found earth, but Langley's horse sprang into the air, landed with a crash on all four feet and, reversing, galloped "home" at a remarkable speed. With pack bouncing on back, tin hat knocked over his face, map case, gas mask, compass, glasses, etc., streaming behind, the rider, hanging on grimly, burst through the outpost line and pulled up only just in time to save himself from running down the C.O. and headquarters, bringing up the rear. Hoping for praise, but expecting abuse, the gallant officer was possibly satisfied with the laconic, "Well, you've done your job. We seem to have found contact all right," from the C.O. "C" Company reinforced the left flank and, under cover of a ditch and some outlying houses, a footing was obtained in the village. Fighting went on from house to house, but eventually the 9th Essex were held up in the open by a machine gun which was being worked at the gates of a chateau. Lieut.-Colonel Russell-Johnson called for volunteers to rush the gun and Captain Barltrop and four or five men dashed forward with the commanding officer. It was an apparently mad thing to do, but audacity paid. A run of some hundred to two hundred

yards brought the party to the shelter of a row of houses. One or two of the number were hit by another gun situated on a slag heap on the left. As Colonel Russell-Johnson and the others neared the machine guns the teams fled. On searching the chateau, however, one prisoner was secured. No further progress could be made that day towards the Canal, as the Battalion was held up by a wood and sugar factory, but Courcelles was in safe keeping. The unit had advanced so far, in fact, that next morning it was called upon to attack in a north-westerly direction towards the Canal over the front of another Brigade. This was because the position was more favourable for the purpose of seizing a bridge which the Brigade were anxious to secure. Stiff hand to hand fighting ensued, with patrol encounters in the buildings and woods, during the course of which a number of prisoners were captured. The Battalion reached the southern approaches of the bridge and established a Lewis gun post under much sniping and machine gun fire. All attempts to cross the bridge—which was destroyed in the middle—were hindered by enemy fire from various directions on the far bank of the Canal and also by a light gun or minenwerfer firing at a low trajectory and trained on the bridge. The positions which the 9th Essex had attained were handed over to the Brigade at night.

"This second attack on the morning of the 13th was memorable to me in that after a pitch black night, during which we were constantly shelled, I set off to reconnoitre just before the attack and found my way into a swamp which engulfed me up to the waist." Thus wrote Captain Barltrop. "The maps in my pocket, which I still have, bear traces of this immersion. Again the Colonel was to the fore and in the advance he was slightly wounded. We gained the Canal bank, thanks largely to the cover afforded by the factory buildings, but found ourselves up against a tremendously strong position. The bridge had been blown up. Yet we received orders to try to cross it. Well, of course, we had to try, but I have never hated giving my men an order so much as when I told them to run up those steps. I had represented the position to headquarters, but it was no good. The attempt had to be made. Twice the men ran up and each time heavy fire was poured on them from the enemy, who were ideally situated opposite in prepared trenches or pits on a high bank which ran just above the towing path. Of course, casualties occurred each time, though I have been ever grateful that they were not serious. I then reported that we had tried and failed—as was inevitable. The crossing was not made until days later, when it was effected by the Sussex on a specially made bridge, with, I believe, no opposition, as the enemy had retired. The light gun above referred to has puzzled me to this day. It was either fired with amazing velocity or was only just across the Canal. There was no warning of the approach of the missile save a rushing noise immediately before the explosion. It was



Gin taken by 9th Essex at Epeby.



TROPHIES CAPTURED AT EPEHY.

not a bomb, but a small shell and not a bit like our old friend the Whizz-Bang, which gave twice as much warning. I received a slight scratch on the hand from it, which turned so septic that five days later I had to go to hospital."

Further posts were established in a belt of trees on the Canal bank, but as the Germans continued obstinately to hold Auby on the right a defensive flank was formed on September 14th. Notwithstanding much attention to Courcelles by the enemy artillery, the reserve companies were able to have their baths and when the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Norfolks on September 15th it went back to trenches south of Henin Liétard. The enemy were still in retrograde movement and on September 17th the 7th Norfolks and Cambridgeshires were across the Canal, with the Essex in close support at Blanche Maison. The next day the Battalion was at Boujon and the next day passed through the Norfolks and formed the advanced guard. Little opposition was encountered and when Orchies was entered a line of outposts was taken up to the east of the town by noon. Many of the French inhabitants were still in the town. The hostile cavalry left five minutes before the arrival of advanced guard and exchanged shots with the scouts in the main streets. The eastern outskirts were shelled fairly heavily during the evening. The Cambridgeshires took the lead on October 20th and the following day the Battalion was in support of the Norfolks at Vieux Conde. There the 36th Brigade relieved the 85th and the Essex rested until October 27th, when, upon a divisional move, they marched to Coutiches and the next day for Raches, where they were until the end of the month, under the command of Major H. Dixon, of the 6th West Riding Regiment. It was at Raches that the Battalion was visited by the Prince of Wales, who, accompanied by Brigadier-General Vincent, chatted with company officers as he passed through on his tour of inspection. Although they knew it not, the 9th Essex had fired their last hostile shot in the war.

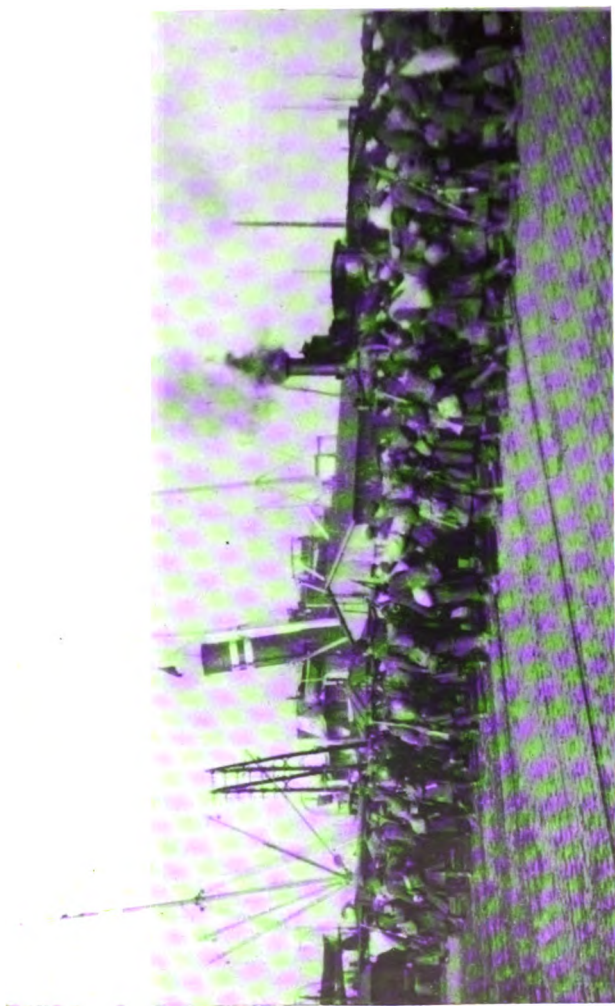
During the month Lieut. A. J. Klein was killed in action and Lieutenants Stephen George Stroud and Ernest Walter Cooper died of wounds. Two officers were wounded. Twenty-two other ranks were killed, 76 wounded and two missing. Those joining for duty comprised eight officers and 219 other ranks.

THE THANKSGIVING SERVICE.

On November 4th the Battalion marched to Courcelles to view the battle position held by the two armies astride the Haute Deule Canal and the next day a move was made to Landas, where training was vigorously undertaken until the 9th, when the Battalion went into billets at Hergnies and when the Armistice came the men were engaged in salvage work and road repair. The Essex were ordered to Bonsecours on November 12th. This town is on the Franco-Belgian border and has the peculiar

distinction that one emerges by one door into Belgium and by the opposite door into France. Lieut.-Colonel H. M. de Sales la Terriere, M.C., resumed command on November 14th and there, on the 17th, a Church of England thanksgiving service was held, the Roman Catholics attending the parish church. The curé's address on that occasion was well remembered for the order in which reference was made to the Belgian allies—France—"so magnanimous and so heroic, whose invincible armies have covered themselves with glory on every battlefield"; America, "who, stirred by our misfortunes, has helped us with an admirable devotion and has not hesitated for the cause of justice to raise and put in the field powerful armies," and, then, lastly, "noble and generous England"—"General, officers, N.C.O.'s and men—we are delighted to see you here among us. In the name of the whole country I salute in you the proud soldiers of the fine and brave army which on the very first day rushed to our help, with untiring energy, harassed and drove back the usurper, and which to-day delivers our land and gives back to Belgium her liberty and her independence." The Battalion took part in the drives, on November 28rd, through the south-western quarter of the Bois de Bonsecours for suspected hidden Germans. Two days later the Battalion marched to St. Amand and the following day to Somain, where the rest of the month was spent. Right through December the 9th Essex were at Somain, employed mainly in salvage, the chief incident being an inspection of the Brigade by the Divisional General on December 9th, when he presented medal ribbons. Life was not easy, for the men did not appreciate the necessity for hard manual work or continued training. The Brigade football cup, however, aroused enthusiasm. Every company put in a team and, with Artillery and R.A.M.C., there were over a score of teams engaged. The final was fought out between "A" and "C" Companies of the 9th Essex, which the latter won by 3—1 amidst scenes of great excitement. Incidentally, too, "A" lost a good deal of money, for they loyally backed their team, although "C" was undoubtedly the better side. In addition, the Battalion also won the Divisional Cup. Early in March the men not yet due for demobilization joined the 15th Essex at Calais and soon only a cadre of fifty remained, which also left for England under Captain Williamson and was demobilized at Shoreham.

"Thus the 9th Essex passed out," wrote a member of the unit, "as it had entered the war. Simply, quietly and without any ceremony. It had been formed merely for the duration of the war and, having done its job, it came, officially, to an end, but its memory will live for ever in the minds of those who were privileged to serve in it."



Troops embarking for demobilization, including men of 9th Essex.



WINNERS OF THE DIVISIONAL CUP, DEC., 1918.

A FEW OF THE "LIGHTER SIDES."

(By the "CASUAL OBSERVER.")

An official War History of the 9th Essex must, of necessity, chiefly be made up of the sterner side of the picture. Yet there were many times during the four and a half years the Battalion was in existence that life had its amusing side. Here, without too much regard for dates, are set forth a few incidents that came to the notice of the writer.

In August and September, '14, when recruits joined the Battalion from the Depot, they arrived with little more than they stood up in, no overcoat and, in some cases, no change of clothing. They had, no doubt, come up with the idea that Army clothing would immediately be supplied. Alas! for their hopes, these were not forthcoming for some time and civilian suits, which might have been quite useful for their original purpose, were not strong enough for military training. Thus in a few weeks holes began to appear in jackets and, what was much more embarrassing, in trousers, so that the under garments projected through these holes, to the great amusement of everyone else, including the civilian population, except the unfortunate wearer!

[The writer's case proved no exception to the rule!]

* * * * *

During the first few weeks the Battalion was at Shorncliffe compulsory bathing parades were held on Friday afternoons, companies marching to near Seabrook—a point where bathing costumes were not required! It was a Battalion order that all ranks should bathe and in one company at least if a man was seen trying to "dodge" the water, he was immediately "ducked" by willing hands. There was one man in this Company who, on the first bathing parade, made no attempt to undress. He professed to be "afraid to go in," but his fears were laughed to scorn and he was forced to undress and was taken down and pushed hard into the water. He appeared to go under, and to remain under, and those who had ducked him immediately got the "wind up" and rushed out to the spot where he had been ducked, thinking that he might drown. Their search was unavailing and they became thoroughly alarmed. Then the man's head appeared a considerable way off and they heard him calling in derision to them. He was an accomplished swimmer and had swum a good way under water! This time the laugh was against the "duckers!"

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There can be little doubt that those who enjoyed the privilege (?) of being under canvas until late on in the year 1914 will

remember it as long as they remember anything. In the early days of the Battalion's history it was enjoyable, but when the rain poured, the evenings were long and the mud intolerable (though this paled into insignificance when we experienced the Hulluch mud in '15 and early '16!) life under canvas left much to be desired. The tent boards got unavoidably soaked with mud and wet, beds had to be "made down" on these soaked boards and, in some cases, tents leaked, soaking kit and bedding right through. Added to this, owing to wind and wet, the tent flaps had to be tightly laced at night, excluding practically all the air. This, with about a dozen men in a tent, left much to be desired concerning the state of the atmosphere therein on the next morning. In charge of the writer's tent was a Lance-Corporal (an "old soldier" in more senses than one!) whose favourite "recreation" was visiting the Canteen. Seldom a night passed but that he had more to drink than was good for him. His return to the tent was usually heralded by his catching his foot against a tent peg, falling on all fours in the mud, and a smothered oath. He would then pick himself up, open the flap of the tent—incidentally letting in as much wet and wind as possible—and enquire in injured tones, "What silly —— has been moving those tent pegs again?"

* * * * *

An N.C.O. in one of the companies was granted leave, which he overstayed very considerably—in fact, he did not return until compelled to do so by an escort sent from the Battalion—result, a court martial, reduction to the ranks, stoppage of pay, etc.—and a transfer to another company. Pay days came and went and, by reason of his stoppage of pay, he had no money to come. The next pay day (being fine and warm, it was held out of doors), the officer who was to pay out was seated at the pay table with the money all set out in neat piles. The Company Quartermaster-Sergeant sat beside him with his "Pay and Mess" Book all ready and the Company were on Pay Parade. Suddenly this man walked quickly up to the table. "Any pay for me this week, Quartermaster-Sergeant?" he asked. "No!" barked the C.Q.M.S., "and don't come here like that when there is an officer present." To the astonishment, and, it must be admitted, the consternation of the younger recruits, the man bawled at the top of his voice, "If there's no pay for me there won't be for anyone else," and, without further ado, he seized the table and tipped it over, sending the money rolling in all directions. The guard room had another inhabitant a few moments later!

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The following anecdote may not be humorous, but it serves to illustrate the spirit that prevailed throughout the Battalion. On the second day of the march from Shorncliffe to Aldershot, the stage to be covered was from Ashford to Maidstone. During



CAPT. WILLIAMSON, a popular Quartermaster of 9th Bn. The Essex Regiment.

the night, when billeted in Ashford, snow had fallen heavily and it was falling when the march commenced next morning. Therefore, "overcoats on" was the order of the day and these, added to the very heavy "going" caused by the difficulty in getting a foothold in the snow, made marching a very tedious, wearying job. One youngster in — Company soon began to feel the effects of marching under such trying circumstances and it looked as though he would be the first to fall out. However, no one wanted their own company to have the bad name of having one of its members to be the first to fall out (as a matter of fact, the Battalion had the distinction of being the only one taking part in the march which completed it without any of its members leaving the ranks), so, to help him along, first one took his rifle, another his pack and, when it was scarcely snowing, another took his great coat, so that he had only himself to see after and he managed to keep going. How often, later on in France, when this youngster had got more hardened, have I seen him doing exactly the same thing himself to help others weaker and less able than himself. This was typical of the *esprit de corps* and spirit of good fellowship which existed throughout the Battalion's existence.

* * * * *

On the first Sunday in June, 1915, occurred that most distressing, soul and body racking march, described elsewhere in this book, which will never be forgotten by those who took part in it. The Battalion was on the march very early in the morning and a halt was ordered about eight o'clock for some tea. The halt was *said* to be for an hour, but the best laid plans of battalion commanders were often upset by the imp who directed the doings of those wonderful beings—Staff Officers! No sooner had hot—very hot—tea been served than up rode one of these "Brass-Hats" to say that our march was to be continued at once! Result—boiling hot tea quickly gulped down, which thoroughly upset the "internal arrangements" and seriously affected the marching capabilities of many scores of men. So on we marched into the heat of the day—boiling hot, not a breath of air, dusty roads and then the awful pavé—with men simply falling as they marched, game to the last, but utterly incapable of continuing. Those of us who *did* finish the march were grimed with dirt, wet through with perspiration and sore footed into the bargain, and we of "Kitchener's Army" were proud to hear some of our regular Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers say that never before had they known such a march and that the youngsters had stuck it well. Battalion headquarters were fixed that day in a very fine chateau and here begins the only "humour" that that day of days provided. The Mess Corporal, Headquarters Officers' Mess Cook and the Headquarters Officers' servants had, after a "wash and brush up" in the yard outside the chateau, proceeded into the house by the back entrance. (The Adjutant's

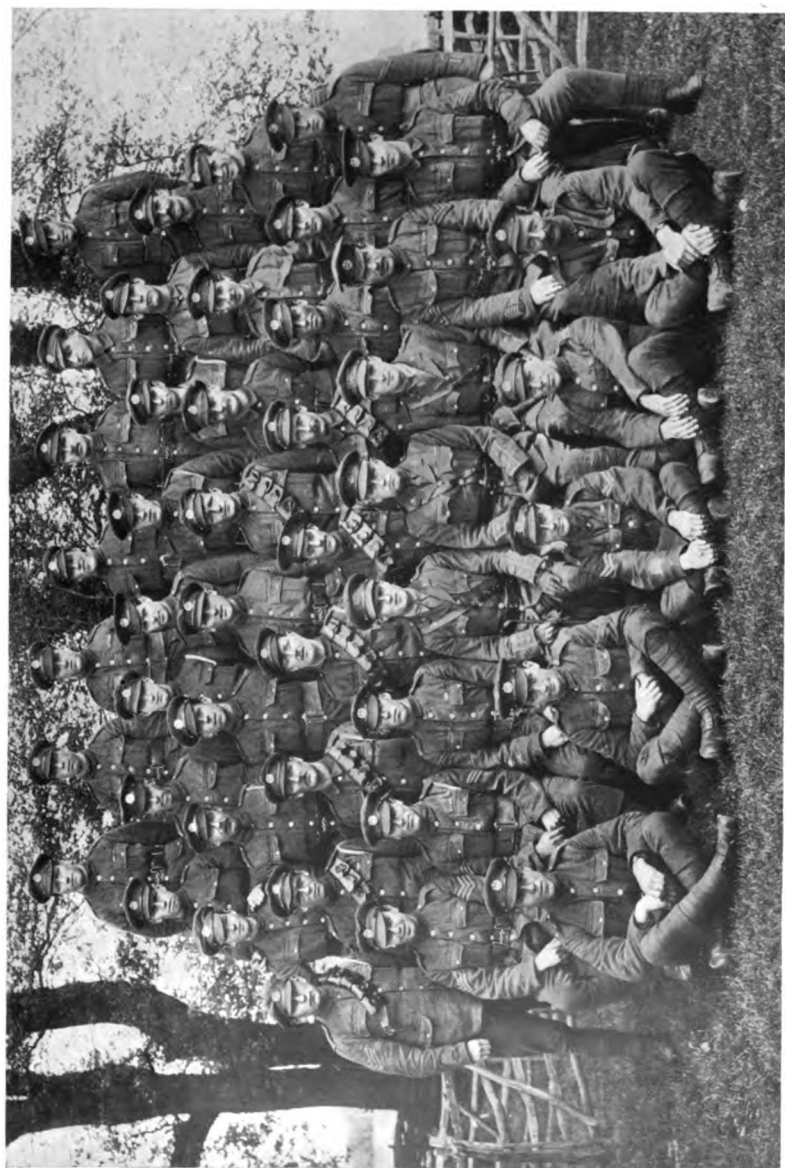
servant had spent years in France and spoke French like a native and he had knocked at the door and explained who they were.) Cooking had prior to this been done under many difficulties by the Mess Cook and his face brightened and his eyes shone in eager anticipation as he beheld a most beautiful English kitchener, with all the latest improvements. "By jove," he was heard to remark, "I bet I'll give the officers a good dinner to-night to make up for to-day's march." So much for his hopes! for no sooner had he begun to get his utensils ready than Madam of the House—she was alone and we saw no one else while we were there—came along in a terrible rage and, stamping her foot, said that no cooking should be done on her range; it must be done outside! This same good lady had a house full of excellent furniture, but in the room that the officers were to occupy she had a long bare deal table and a few old hard wooden chairs; everything else had been moved and sacking was used to cover the floor! Her "evening meal" was partaken of about half-past six. It consisted of a slice of dry bread and a little warm milk—drunk from the saucepan in which it had been heated! Between each mouthful she "told her beads" and her lips moved in prayer. When it came to the officers' dinner time certain of them felt that a little wine would be good for the stomach's sake. "Madam" was approached and, with great alacrity, she produced a couple of bottles, guaranteed aged and excellent—and for which an exorbitant charge was made. Upon examination the quality of the wine was found to be greatly exaggerated and very little of it was consumed!

Reveille the next morning was at 1.30 for an extra early start and, in packing up, the Mess Corporal, who was a teetotaler, was told that the wine could be given to the driver of the mess cart. He picked up the bottles and was taking them through the house when "Madam," who had got up at this unearthly hour, cried out that she was being robbed, that her excellent wine was being stolen, and she would not be convinced that such was not the case. We left her gesticulating wildly, calling us many hard, and undeserved, names, while several of us regretted bitterly that we knew no French whereby we might retaliate!

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What need to remind those who experienced it of the mud and water at Hulluch in the winter of 1915-16! Yet, despite the beastliness and the seriousness of it, it was the cause of a certain amount of humour. When the mud was liquid progress was fairly comfortable, but when it began to dry it got fearfully sticky and at nearly every step the long trench boots, which were fastened to the trousers buttons, were nearly pulled off the feet and the fate of innumerable trouser buttons can well be imagined. The rate of travel was also seriously impeded.

When the mud was deep and very liquid there was, sometimes,



CADRE, 9th Bn. THE ESSEX REGT.

a humorous side to it. If the wearer of the long boots happened to be tall he cleared the liquid all right, but it was not an uncommon sight to see a small man with correspondingly shorter boots and the wet mud pouring in at the top of his boots !

When the liquid mud was at its worst Battalions only spent 48 hours in the actual front line and they carried all rations and water (the latter in old petrol tins) in with them. Officers and all ranks as a rule took a hand in carrying the sandbags containing rations, the petrol tins holding water. One trustworthy person was usually made responsible for the bottle containing the rum ration !

Here may it be noted that, despite suggestions to the contrary, the rum ration was of the utmost value and benefit, especially during such trying periods as those just referred to. After spending a night on the various duties such as sentries, wiring parties, holding the "craters," etc., men were literally chilled to the bone and the rum served first thing in the morning had the effect of warming the body—and, incidentally, refreshing it—so that a man could start his day's work warm and keep warm throughout a good part of the day. The writer of this note had never previously tasted anything at all in the way of intoxicating liquor, but he was often, and will ever remain, exceedingly grateful for his ration of rum.

To revert to the mud, a very vivid memory arises in the writer's mind. One pouring wet afternoon in February, 1916—"February fill-dyke" with a vengeance—the Battalion was making its way to the front line. With the Battalion headquarters party was the Adjutant at the front carrying, if memory serves, the rum and a bag of biscuits. Just behind him came the sergeant in the Battalion Orderly Room, with a large haversack at the side containing papers, books, etc., and both hands occupied in holding a bag of rations over each shoulder. The mud was particularly dirty looking and was just over knee-deep, and the said sergeant caught his foot in an unseen telephone wire, which had fallen to the bottom of the trench, and took a toss, face foremost into the mud !!! The roars of laughter which greeted this exhibition were later almost drowned by the sergeant's "gentle" remarks when he had extricated himself from the mud and removed some, at least, of the mud and water from his mouth, eyes, ears and nose !

* * * * *

The Battalion had just returned to billets and clean shirts had been drawn from store. A company commander was visiting his billets and he found a platoon sergeant carefully examining his clean shirt. "Please, sir, will you look at this?" said the sergeant, pointing out some suspicious-looking objects along the seams of his shirt. "They are all dead," said the officer. "Yes," said the N.C.O., "but in three days they rise again."

10th Bn. The Essex Regiment

FOREWORD.

(By COLONEL SIR DONALD BANKS, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.).

MR. Burrows has painted an effective picture of the 10th Battalion, and, appropriately enough, has depicted it against a strong background of the famous 18th Division.

We were proud to belong to the 18th Division, proud to be told that we were one of its best battalions, proud even of its ambiguous honour of being first or second after the Guards and the 51st Division on the German "danger list," though it meant, that the enemy pitted their best troops against us. As action followed action with an almost unvaried record of success the 10th Essex realized how much it owed to the high *esprit de corps* which it learnt from that great trainer of the Division, and of the British Army, General Maxse.

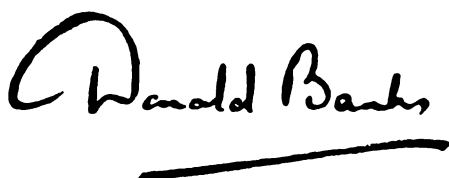
History at its best cannot be other than a partial picture, and in these regimental histories military episodes and feats, dates, units and places must need be the stuff of which the story is made. To the survivors a different picture is conjured up. Memories of the utmost limits of physical and moral endurance, of infinite discomforts and momentary horrors, of gas and high explosive, of fear gripping the stomach and determination not to yield to it struggling for the mastery—these come readily to the mind, though, indeed, they are little more than the high lights of a small proportion of the time.

The real history, however, which can never be fully written, is the story of the human side of a family of five and a half thousand men of all sorts and conditions, thrown together in a crucible in which true character was rapidly disclosed. They were just ordinary men, no blood-thirsty swashbucklers, but men who loved peace, as Englishmen do, and who were sustained throughout by the hope that victory would ensure peace permanently—"little Tommy" Thompson reading Shakespeare up to zero hour; John Howitt writing verses through bombardments; the gentle Ridley; the lovable Archibald; fiery Hunt and hyper-sensitive Ede Q. Mears; Bush, the old-soldier ruffian with a heart of gold; "Tiny" Carter, the giant slow-smiling countryman who did all his comrades' fatigues; Harry Polston, the ever-cheerful Cockney cook; Smith, the saintly carpenter; debonair Bertie Hedley; stolid Kingston, shot through the

shoulder yet remaining at duty for 12 hours; quiet Jacklin losing an arm with unquenchable spirit; the methodical Scholey working for others until the end; the country curate Randell transfigured in the terrors of Trones Wood—these and their thousand fellows, united in common danger and high enterprise, in unvoiced devotion to a regimental symbolism which stood for a particular corner of a much-loved England and in a comradeship passing description, built up an inner story inscribed deep in the characters of those whose privilege it was to form this happy band of brothers.

Of this band it suffices to record that there were few who went unwounded, while many were wounded two, three or four times, that one of every five was killed and that many since have died of disabilities incurred on active service.

“To you from failing hands they throw the torch;
Be yours to hold it high.”

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Donald Banks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D". Below the signature is a thick, horizontal black line.

1st January, 1935.

10th Battalion The Essex Regiment.

FORMATION AND TRAINING.

THE 18th Division has a peculiar claim to be kept green in Essex memory. It was formed in Essex, spent the greater part of its home service in Essex and included within its order of battle the 10th Battalion The Essex Regiment, one of the several units which the County supplied to Kitchener's Army, and which could proudly claim, when the war cloud had rolled away, that it had won more battle honours than any other Essex battalion. Early in September, 1914, the 53rd Brigade (6th Royal Berkshire, 10th Essex, 8th Norfolk and 8th Suffolk) and the 54th Brigade (6th Northampton, 7th Bedfordshire,¹ 11th Royal Fusiliers and 12th Middlesex) were formed at Colchester and, at the same time, the 55th Brigade (7th Queen's, 7th Buffs, 7th Royal West Kent and 8th East Surrey) assembled at Purfleet. This last-named brigade joined the other two brigades at Colchester in April, 1915, thus completing the Division. It was the first Brigade of the Division to come under hostile fire, for when a German aeroplane passed up the Thames on Christmas Day, 1914, it dropped a bomb at Purfleet at 1 p.m., just as the commander of the 7th Queen's was wishing the men the compliments of the season. The four brigades of Divisional Artillery and the Pioneer Battalion, 8th Royal Sussex, were also formed at Colchester.

The Division was fortunate in having only two commanders throughout the period of its existence—Lieut.-General Sir Ivor Maxse, K.C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., from October, 1914, until January, 1917, and thereafter Major-General Sir Richard Philipps Lee, K.C.B., C.M.G., until the end of the war. The latter, in his last order of the day, dated 2nd December, 1918, reminded all ranks the Division had taken part in most of the great battles in France and Belgium from the Somme, 1916, to the Armistice and throughout it had proved itself equally strong both in attack and defence, and had earned a reputation second to none through the courage, resolution and achievements of the officers, non-commissioned officers and men. Sir Harry Rawlinson, then commanding the Fourth Army, wrote on November 23rd, 1918, particularly commending the part played by the Division in the series of operations which brought the war to a conclusion and which was then termed "The Hundred Days," as had been a previous historic episode a century before, viz., the re-entry of

1. The 10th Royal Fusiliers were in the Brigade for a few weeks, but they were very shortly replaced by the 7th Bedford.

Napoleon into France and the desperate effort which closed with his defeat at Waterloo. "The fine spirit of discipline and fighting energy," Lord Rawlinson wrote, "which characterized the 18th Division throughout these operations has filled me with admiration and I offer to all ranks my warmest thanks for their gallantry and skill in so many hard fought battles. I specially call to mind the strenuous times before Gentelles and Cachy, the taking of Albert and Meaulte, the capture of Bernafay and Trones Woods, the forcing of the Tortille River, the battles around and beyond Ronssoy and finally the attacks on Bousies, Hecq and Forêt de Mormal. It is indeed a record that every officer, N.C.O. and man has a right to be proud of and I very much regret that you are not marching to the frontier with the Fourth Army." The decision not to take the Division to the Rhine was due to the fact that the units forming Kitchener's Army were selected as the first for disbandment, and the Division passed out of existence on March 19th, 1919, the special order then issued being dated at Ligny. A fine tribute was also paid the Battalion in 1930, by the Lord-Lieutenant (Brigadier-General R. B. Colvin, C.B.), upon the occasion of the unveiling of a stained glass window to the memory of fallen comrades in the Essex Regiment Chapel. General Colvin wrote: "Continuous fighting was the lot of this unit throughout the war, which may be said to have culminated for them at Trones Wood in August, 1918, when the Battalion, which had quite recently been reinforced by a large number of only partially-trained recruits, charged and routed with the bayonet the Second Regiment German Grenadier Guards. Needless to add, the Battalion invariably received the highest praise and commendations from the General Officers concerned. Five thousand five hundred officers and men passed through the Battalion, out of whom 1,100 were killed or died of wounds. The County of Essex will ever remember them and their achievements with gratitude and admiration."

The Division, on assembly, represented very little more than a collection of several thousand men, full of enthusiasm and keen to do their best, but without uniforms, equipment or arms, and it was many weeks before these deficiencies were supplied. Desire to learn had, however, overcome many obstacles and, as the outward semblance of soldiers was gradually achieved, so also developed discipline, efficiency and *esprit de corps*. The 10th Essex, in common with all the other units, had these initial difficulties to overcome. The men were exceedingly good material, being fifty per cent. of them recruits from Stratford, Leyton, Poplar, Bethnal Green and Walthamstow. Another 25 per cent. were from the more rural districts of Essex and the remaining 25 per cent. came from Norfolk and Suffolk. This amalgam of good, yet varied, East Coast stock made a first-rate fighting unit. The ready wit and quickness of the East-Enders were blended with the strength and endurance of the



Lieut.-Col. T. M. Banks, D.S.O., M.C. (then 2nd Lieut.), in the trenches near La Boisselle, 1915. He commanded 10th Bn. The Essex Regiment during the last months of the war.

countryman and many there are who will assert that this admixture produces first-class fighting men. So it proved in the case of the 10th Essex, at any rate. The Battalion came into existence at Shorncliffe Camp in September, where the 9th Essex were already in training. Indeed, the first members of the 10th Essex were passed on from the sister battalion. The first sign of the existence of the new unit was a bell tent, upon which was a board with the chalked inscription, "Orderly Room. 10th Essex." And authority was, indeed, needed to create a regiment out of the hundreds of men who, joining in the fervency of patriotic feeling, found that the arrangements for their feeding, housing and clothing were a long way in arrear of requirement. The response to the call had been so great that it had outrun the resources, and deficiencies were only made good over many weeks. But where there was goodwill, difficulties were soon overcome, particularly when platoon and company organization came into being and officers and N.C.O.'s, tutored by the leaven of Regular and Territorial experience, rapidly assimilated the greatest of military lessons, the enforcement of prompt obedience to command. The story of the early days of the 10th Essex is very similar to that told at some length in the narrative of the 9th Essex, but there is one incident that is a proud memory with every survivor of those memorable days. Captain Heppell had been placed in command of the Battalion pending the appointment of senior officer. Only a week or two before he had been a junior subaltern, but now he was faced with an emergency which has tested many old and more experienced campaigners. The men were hungry. The commissariat arrangements were not equal to the requirements and so it came about that a deputation of indignant soldiers—but a few days before independent working men—waited upon him and told, in lurid language, the urgency of their need. Patient explanation was of no avail; they wanted food. At last, exasperated at their insistence, the harassed captain threw off his tunic and, if he could not give them rations, offered to fight them one after another, beginning with the ringleader. This timely exhibition of pugilistic ability in the British officer had a salutary effect. Combat was declined and thereafter the men of the 10th Essex were content to understand that the best that was possible was being done for them in abnormal circumstances. The Captain quickly passed on from the 10th Essex to the 11th Essex, but the former Battalion will always claim him for their very own. The second officer to join made his appearance in mufti—"very well cut mufti, as became a subaltern whom the Essex always declared to be the best turned-out officer in the Battalion"—but Lieut. A. S. Tween was also a real soldier and proved his worth during almost the whole period of the war, until he fell in front of Frieres Wood in March, 1918, at the crossing of the Crozat Canal.

In October the 10th Essex left Shorncliffe for Hyderabad Barracks, Colchester, and in passing through Liverpool Street Station were the subject of a great demonstration of welcome by relatives and friends. So much so, that some were left behind when the train steamed out for Colchester, but they followed later under the kindly supervision of a party of officers specially detailed for the purpose. The early days of Colchester were spent in the blue clothing which became the familiar badge of distinction between soldier and civilian, but the wearing of which was not relished by the ardent volunteer, who longed for the distinctive khaki of war-time renown. The recruitment of the band was a notable feat, which has obtained almost legendary fame. The visit of a cornet player to Wivenhoe on a Saturday evening, an eloquent and forceful speech to the local band, and ere the night had passed the 10th Essex had a right loyal company to inspire all ranks with martial music.

The 10th Essex were fortunate in having successive commanding officers who were keen and experienced soldiers, alas! not exempt from the casualties of war. The first was Colonel E. R. Scott, who was succeeded in March, 1915, by Lieut.-Colonel B. O. Fyffe (Gloucestershires). Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Radcliffe, 1st Devons, took over command on October 23rd, 1915, until he was killed on January 31st, 1916. Lieut.-Colonel H. L. Scott was the next commanding officer until he was wounded on July 19th. Major J. L. Lewis followed for a few days and then Major J. Crookenden, D.S.O., the Buffs, was in command from July 28th to September 18th, 1916. At that date Lieut.-Colonel C. W. Frizell, 1st Royal Berkshire, took over the leadership. He was wounded in the first battle of Hangard, April, 1918, and Major T. M. Banks was in temporary command during the summer of that year and took over with the substantive rank in September, 1918, when Colonel Frizell was promoted brigadier-general. Colonel Banks left almost immediately to take a senior officers' course at Aldershot and Lieut.-Colonel A. P. Churchill was in temporary command for a short time until October 26th, and he was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel R. Forbes, D.S.O., M.C., who handed over when Colonel Banks returned after the Armistice.

Colonel E. R. Scott had Captain G. K. Meares as adjutant and R.S.M. Cooper as the senior warrant officer. Each of the companies came to possess distinct characteristics. Thus "A" Company (Major Wheatley) was spruce and debonair, with the orderly room as the Mayfair of Hyderabad Barracks; "B" Company (Captain Stewart) was said to have a range of men of all types, but full of desire to increase its social prestige to the level of "A" Company, "as Forest Gate aspires to the ultra respectability of Brentwood"; "C" Company (Captain Lewis) was dubbed "the Prussian Guard" from the strictness of its discipline, and "D" Company (Captain Wyeth) had a



*LIEUT.-COL. B. O. FYFFE who took the
10th Bn. The Essex Regt. to France.*

fraternal spirit which was sustained throughout the campaign. "The Battalion passed through varied phases of training. At one time the key to a soldierly perfection lay in the ability to construct a trestle bridge, at other times it was essential to salvation to be able to knot and lash, then came the era of landscape targets and an enthusiasm, of short duration, for early morning runs across the Abbey Fields. From such fads and fancies we graduated to musketry training over the ranges of Middlewick and trench digging in the fields of Donyland until we were ambitious enough to attempt field operations on the familiar ground of Abberton and Wivenhoe. Then came the greater moments when the Battalion got together, the anxious flutterings of company commanders before the C.O. rode round, and the still greater agitation when, on the line of march, he happened to turn his head to see if the files were straight. 'Cover off from front to rear,' 'Dress by the right each section of fours,' *ad nauseam*, while the old piping fife and drum band made brave squeakings with the 'Farmer's Boy.'" As field training progressed the influence of the divisional commander, Major-General Maxse, became more and more marked, aided by an almost uncanny gift of knowing every subaltern by name. At the end of April, 1915, there was a brigade march into Suffolk. First an eighteen miles' tramp to Ipswich, where the reception was most hospitable, then on to Woodbridge, Hollesley Bay and back again by way of Woodbridge to Ipswich. At the Suffolk town a sudden night alarm found quite half the Battalion enjoying hospitality, and there was much trepidation of spirit as small parties glided back as unobtrusively as possible into the ranks whilst on the march to Colchester. On the road the 54th Brigade was passed, going out for the hard training which the 53rd Brigade had endured, and General Maxse was there, too, to take the salute as the brigades tramped along. The 53rd came back hardened campaigners, having marched one hundred miles in seven days. In May, 1915, the 10th Essex, with the rest of the Division, bade farewell to Colchester after a strenuous but pleasant sojourn, having been ordered to Codford St. Mary, on Salisbury Plain. The march from Colchester was by way of Braintree, Bishop Stortford and Hertford, at each of which places the night was spent. At Hertford train was taken to Codford, where the camp was large enough to accommodate the whole of the Division. It had been built in record time by Sir John Jackson and Co., and consisted of row upon row of corrugated iron huts. The weeks rapidly passed in intensive training, which included trench digging at Yarnboro Castle, field training over Stony Hill, bombing, with missiles made out of jumpots, gas mask drill, with primitive cotton waste and black crepe, and Lewis gun classes.

FAREWELL REVIEW BY THE KING.

Then, in July, the Division was reviewed by King George V

near Stonehenge—sure sign of sterner times in store—and later in the month came the final order for embarkation, with a stirring message of farewell to the Division from His Majesty :—

“ You are about to join your comrades at the Front in bringing to a successful end this relentless war of nearly twelve months’ duration. Your prompt patriotic answer to the Nation’s Call to Arms will never be forgotten. The keen exertions of all ranks during the period of training have brought you to a state of efficiency not unworthy of my Regular Army. I am confident that in the field you will nobly uphold the traditions of the fine regiments whose names you bear. Ever since your enrolment I have closely watched the growth and steady progress of all units. I shall continue to follow with interest the fortunes of your Division. In bidding you farewell, I pray that God may bless you in all your undertakings.”

To this salutation, addressed to those about to die for their country, General Maxse replied, “ I beg you will convey to His Majesty our unalterable devotion to his Person and to his Throne and our fixed determination to uphold the best traditions of the British Army in war.”

On July 24th, 1915, the transport and machine guns of the 10th Essex, under Major C. M. Wheatley, left Codford St. Mary and proceeded to Havre via Southampton. The next day the main body of the Battalion also entrained and embarked at Folkestone at midnight, arriving in drizzling rain at Boulogne camp at 3 a.m. on July 26th. The officers who embarked for France were : Headquarters, Lieut.-Colonel B. O. Fyffe ; Second-in-command, Major H. L. Scott ; Adjutant, Captain G. K. Meares ; Transport Officer, Lieut. E. B. P. Davis ; Lewis Gun Officer, Lieut. W. C. Neild ; Quartermaster, Lieut. D. B. Cooper ; M.O., Lieut. T. Lovett. “ A ” Company—Major C. M. Wheatley, Lieut. A. D. Womersley, 2nd Lieutenants A. J. Beard, H. G. Sheldon, J. V. Jacklin, J. W. Dalton and J. E. Osborne. “ B ” Company—Lieut. A. S. Tween, Lieut. R. T. F. Hedley, 2nd Lieutenants H. L. Burton, D. C. Tollworthy, A. M. Byerley and A. E. M. Corke. “ C ” Company—Captain J. L. Lewis, Lieutenants C. M. Ridley and R. A. Chell, 2nd Lieutenants J. D. Archibald, H. E. Hudson and T. A. Evans. “ D ” Company—Captain F. J. S. Wyeth, Captain F. Western, Lieutenants H. E. Hawkins and G. J. Thompson, 2nd Lieutenants T. M. Banks and W. G. P. Hunt.

IN FRANCE.

In the evening the Battalion entrained for Bertangles, lying N.W. of Amiens, and arrived at a siding about a mile distant from the village as dawn was breaking. They were met by the brigadier, Brigadier-General W. B. Hickie. Thence the Battalion marched eight miles to Rubempre through peaceful country, rich with the fruit and corn of harvest and showing no sign of the devastation of war. The Division had been ordered to



*Archibald, Evans, Hudson, Chell, Ridley, "C" Coy, Officers, before embarking
for active service.*

join the X Corps of the Third Army (Monro), then just formed, and concentrating in the Fleselles area, about fifteen miles from the line. "The band was particularly laden, for every musician had his instrument in addition to the usual infantryman's kit. The man who perhaps bears the palm for enthusiasm in this line was Private Hatchett, of Banks's platoon, who was discovered to be carrying a puppy in his mess tin and taking it out of his pack for feeding at the halts. . . . My most vivid memory of the march is the carrying of a kettledrum for one bandsman and of a rifle for another." At Rubempre the transport and machine guns rejoined. The Essex men were the first British troops billeted in the village and they were not impressed with the amenities. Moreover, the Battalion was kept as busy at drill as in England, and fighting, as yet, seemed afar off. In a few days there was a different story to tell. After inspection by the Corps commander in a thunderstorm on August 2nd, in a field near the chateau at Molliens-au-Bois, the 10th Essex and 6th Royal Berkshire marched twelve miles to Bouzincourt. The former unit had a strength of 32 officers and 916 other ranks. The rain continued as the men passed through Beaucourt-sur-l'Hallue and exchanged cheers with two French units marching down from the line. Then, by way of Contay, Warloy and Senlis, where the sight of British was a novelty and fit subject for an enthusiastic welcome, Bouzincourt was reached at 10 p.m., three miles from the front line. Whilst the Battalion rested in billets the C.O., with other officers, on August 3rd, visited the section of trenches to be taken over hard by Authuille, in the Ancre Valley, held by the 152nd Brigade of the 51st (Highland) Division. On August 6th two companies, under Major Scott, went for instruction into the sector facing Thiepval, held by the 6th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who gave them a most hospitable welcome. The first tour was of 48 hours' duration. Each rank was attached to a similar rank and duty in the Highland unit and thus obtained first-hand insight into trench warfare. Then, upon a second visit of twenty-four hours, a platoon functioned as such within the Highland company, and on a third occasion a complete Essex company performed duty as a part of the Scots battalion. This portion of the line was quiet—far different from the state of things a year after—and as the weather was good the Essex men had their initiation into the responsibilities of active service under almost ideal conditions. The men were keen at their work and it is recorded that, when the first night march to the line commenced, they were so impressed with the necessity for concealment that they marched a long way bent almost double, touch being kept by the man in front grasping the bayonet of his comrade in the rear. Not a cigarette was lit, though afterwards the welcome truth was discovered that pipes were, in fact, smoked in the trenches, right under the enemy's noses! The first casualty reported

was the accidental wounding of Private A. Gillman on August 11th. The period of instruction ended, the Battalion marched to Daours-Vecquemont on August 13th and went into billets with a fighting strength of 32 officers and 901 other ranks. The first trial of the trenches had been happily devoid of fatality, but it had not been lacking in humorous incidents, as the following will show. One platoon had left the communication trench on its return journey when a shrapnel shell burst overhead. "Nearly the whole of the case banged on to the ground about twenty yards ahead of us. A man of about forty, physically one of the weakest in the platoon, rushed for it as a souvenir. He burnt his fingers; the platoon laughed. He kicked water on to the missile from a handy puddle and then carried this pound or more of iron in his hand to the first halt. There he carefully put the first souvenir away in an already overloaded pack. He went sick next day and took his souvenir with him. He was too old for war and never returned to us. I often wonder if he still has that lump of iron!" The Battalion was billeted in Daours, which lay six miles from Amiens, where the chief employment was in platoon and company training. There were also celebrations of promotions in the officers' mess, chief among them the elevation of Lieutenants Ridley, Womersley and Tween to the rank of captain. "The nine days spent in Daours were amongst the happiest in France and eighteen months later we were still censoring letters to members of the fair sex, both young and old, of that town." On August 20th the 53rd Brigade, less the 8th Norfolk, were inspected by M. Millerand, the French Minister of War. This was preparatory to a move, for on August 22nd, with a strength of 31 officers and 898 other ranks, the Battalion marched to Bray. The 53rd Brigade, now that the initiatory trench training had been completed, had become responsible for a sector of the line. It was to take over from the Carnoy-Mametz road (exclusive) to a small quarry, known as the "D-francais" sector. The 8th Suffolk and 6th Royal Berkshire were the first to take charge of the trenches, whilst the 10th Essex and 8th Norfolk were in reserve. When waiting for their turn these units constructed a series of bomb-proof shelters in Happy Valley, about one and a half miles north of Bray, whilst a company was also employed in duplicating the existing trenches from the Citadel to Wellington Redoubt and in finding working parties for a mining section in the front line. When engaged upon the latter the Germans exploded a mine which injured six men, though not seriously.

Upon the night of September 5th the 10th Essex relieved the 6th Royal Berkshire and took over trenches which were on the average about 180 yards from the enemy's, though at points where saps and extensions had been made the distance was only about 45 yards. There had been considerable fighting over the area nine months previously, in the course of which the

French had captured the enemy front line and support trench. As a consequence, the line ran in and out and No Man's Land was punctured with derelict communication trenches. "C" was on the right, "D" Company on the left, with "B" Company in support and "A" Company in reserve at Wellington Redoubt. The chief troubles were from sniping and mining. The trenches also required a good deal of attention, particularly on the flanks. Although big gun ammunition was rationed, there was a plentiful supply for small arms and it was not unusual for the sentries to exchange shots all through the night. About this time a draft of 115 other ranks arrived. On the night of September 7th a British mine exploded on the left of the Battalion, where the 11th Royal Fusiliers occupied the newly-formed crater. The enemy retaliated with an eruption twelve yards from the north-eastern corner of the "D" at 11 p.m. on the following night. They blew in a portion of the front parapet, which buried four men of the Essex. A working party, under Lieut. Hedley, dug them out, finishing their task at 1.30 a.m. When dawn came on September 9th it was found that the Germans had occupied the far side of the crater. They were shelled out of it by the R.F.A. and when they came back again in the evening they were once more turned out by the artillery. A report reached headquarters that the "D" had been lost and General Hickie came up personally to satisfy himself that no such untoward event had happened. The fact was that a small point known as Timber Post had passed out of our possession. The fight for the crater continued whilst the 10th Essex remained in the line, the chief annoyance being from "sausages," which were fearsome missiles. They usually consisted of a metal drum, 2ft. long and 1ft. in diameter, with a handle at each end. The casing was thin and the cylinder contained about 50lb. of high explosive. On September 12th, the day when four platoons of Lancashire Fusiliers were attached for instruction, an operation was planned by Captain Wyeth, of "D" Company, whereby a mine should be exploded and the front edges of the "D" and Timber Post made more tenable. As soon as the mine was fired bombing parties were to become active and a howitzer battery was asked to pay particular attention to the point from which the enemy delivered his "sausages." The explosion of the mine produced no noticeable effect externally, but the anticipation was that it had destroyed the enemy's counter-shaft which ran parallel with it, about three feet to the right. Two platoons (Banks and Byerley) worked forward and occupied Timber Post, with the result that three snipers' posts and an enemy machine gun were put out of action. It was calculated that over 30,000 rounds of small arms ammunition were expended in providing covering fire against enemy snipers. The next day two of the latter approached Timber Post and were immediately shot. Save for interchange of artillery fire, there was nothing further

of note affecting the Battalion until its relief on September 17th by 1st Norfolk. The unit went out by companies by way of Wellington Avenue, having given its name in its first tour of the front line to a communication trench which it had dug and which was known hereafter as "Essex Trench." "The general quietness of this section of the line is, perhaps, best shown by a description of the trench discipline maintained. At 'stand down' every morning the company commander and his second-in-command carried out a trench inspection. Every empty cartridge case and every scrap of paper had to be picked up and deposited in the correct waste bag before their arrival, and we had to sweep the floor of the trench and firestep with trench-made brooms. Anyone with any command at all took this first period of trench warfare with an absurd degree of seriousness, and simultaneously deprived himself of a great deal of the sleep he could well have done with."

The night of September 17th was spent in Bray and the next night in billets at Morlancourt, and then the Battalion went into divisional reserve at Buire, where, with a strength of 81 officers and 982 other ranks, it was inspected by Lord Kitchener on September 21st. The ceremony took place in a field just south of the Albert-Amiens road, near Ribemont.

SERVICE IN THE ILÔT.

It was expected that the Division would be employed in the Loos offensive, which opened on September 25th, but though the mutterings of the bombardment could be heard afar off, other orders intervened and the Battalion, on September 26th, occupied trenches near to La Boisselle, in relief of the 8th Suffolk. The chief interest for the 10th Essex in this sector was the western part of the village street, which jutted out from the remainder of the line and was known as the "Ilôt." "It was a queer conglomeration of shallow, narrow slits between old and new sandbags—these served for trenches—foundations of and the rubble from destroyed houses, a cemetery and used and disused mine shafts. As the village sloped up gently eastwards, the enemy had an excellent view, at close range, of our forward trenches and the 'Ilôt'." When the 10th Essex were in possession the 179th Tunnelling Co. had five shafts in and around the point, which required six reliefs of 32 men each every four hours. The first night's work consisted mainly of bursts of machine gun fire upon portions of the enemy's wire, which had been cut during the day by the artillery with the object of preventing repair. Patrols sent out reported, however, that working parties were engaged upon the repair of the wire between Ovillers and La Boisselle and that there was much movement of transport north-east of the latter village. It was felt that artillery retaliation was not to be had in sufficient quantity to stop the fire of hostile trench mortars. On the



A Sentry-post in the Ilot. Note the camouflaged periscope.

morning of September 27th a small mine was exploded by the R.E., and it was reported that an enemy machine gun post, a sniper's post and listening post had been destroyed. The enemy replied later with trench mortars and rifle grenades from the west of La Boisselle upon the rear of the "Ilôt" and were treated to 4.5 howitzer fire as a retort. A hostile working party also appeared in the left crater opposite the "Ilôt" and were bombed out. The first officer of the Battalion to fall in action was 2nd Lieut. H. E. Hudson, who commanded a platoon of "C" Company, which held a front line post. He was a bombing enthusiast and determined to locate a sniper. In the twilight he went over the parapet, but had not gone far when he died, shot through the head. He was buried in the French cemetery at Albert next day. German mortar fire did considerable damage to the trenches. On the evening of September 29th two dug-outs behind the "Ilôt," occupied by "A" Company, were hit and buried 17 men, four of whom were killed and 13 injured. The first note of a German aeroplane was heard on September 30th. It flew over from the direction of Contalmaison. A company of the 7th Royal Berkshire was attached for instructional purposes. On October 1st portions of the sandbagged "Ilôt" were rebuilt, which had been damaged by mortar fire, and next day fires were observed in and around La Boisselle. Sounds as of a windlass working in a crater north of the "Ilôt" caused the bombers to pay special attention to it, for it was thought the Germans were mining there. Two "sausages" destroyed two dug-outs at the "Ilôt" on October 5th, causing three casualties, but the moral effect obtained by the explosion of these missiles was evidently passing, for it was observed on this occasion that "fortunately, most of the force is expended upwards, and, therefore, unless they get a direct hit, very little damage is done. The burst is very local." The Essex machine guns were very busy that night spraying La Boisselle-Contalmaison road, where the movement of enemy transport had been heard. An air fight was seen on October 6th, when a German 'plane was chased by a British machine and believed to have been brought down in flames. During this day the 4.5 howitzers were very busy replying to mortars and the following is given as an example of the routine work which was performed: "Laying sump covers in front line, deepening new Dalhousie, revetting firestep in St. Andrew's, building firestep in trenches 124 and 125 and Keats' Redan, making waterproof recess for bomb store in Burnt Island, rebuilding back walls in St. Ronan's, building four new snipers' posts." The next day the 8th Suffolk took over and the Battalion went into "good and compact" billets at Albert after eleven days in the trenches and possessing very strong opinions concerning it. They lamented the scarcity of ammunition which prevented the artillery from firing except for purposes of retaliation and

sometimes that could not be obtained; the parapets were not bullet-proof; there was insufficient barbed wire in front of the support trenches; telephone communication was interrupted between companies and headquarters owing to faulty wire. There was, too, a "lack of bombs, especially rifle grenades, which prevented a quarter the number being thrown at the enemy as were thrown by him, and also inability to answer the 'sausage' fire owing to the defects which developed in the trench mortar battery attached to the sub-sector."

The chief buildings of Albert, including the cathedral, had been sadly knocked about by the German fire prior to the British Army taking over this portion of the line from the French. The greater part of the town was intact, however. Only a few hundreds of inhabitants remained and there was ample accommodation for the Battalion. Many estaminets remained open, whilst the town baths enabled every man to have a wash and change of clothes. Digging in the Albert defences, which were paved with bricks from the ruined houses, and instruction in the system of supporting artillery fire provided serious occupation and football and cinema entertainments were the lighter relief.

The 10th Essex relieved the 8th Suffolk on October 15th, when they had two companies in front and two in reserve, which changed about every four days. The Battalion was well up to strength, having 29 officers and 967 other ranks. Officers' patrols were used to ascertain upon what task the German working parties were employed. On October 16th the enemy exploded a small mine on the side of the "Ilôt," damaged a couple of shafts and blew in about twenty yards of the northern face, burying three men in the process. The rest of the day the men were employed on replacing the damage, in wiring and in cutting a new trench from "T" sap towards the newly-formed crater. There was daily exchange of artillery fire, the "whizz-bangs" being particularly active. Then on October 29th 179th Tunnelling Company exploded a mine, protected by a field artillery barrage. A dozen bombers threw missiles into the newly formed crater, the near lip of which was occupied by three of the Essex snipers. The enemy retorted with "sausages" and "whizz-bangs." Repair and improvement of trenches was the daily routine, varied by "rat-catching and partridge potting," the birds shot during the day being retrieved at night. Private R. F. Rose was sniped whilst drinking tea when on sentry duty in the early morning. He was the second of the two deaths in "C" Company up to that time and, singularly enough, was the servant to 2nd Lieut. H. E. Hudson, who, it will be recalled, met his death in almost similar fashion a few days before.

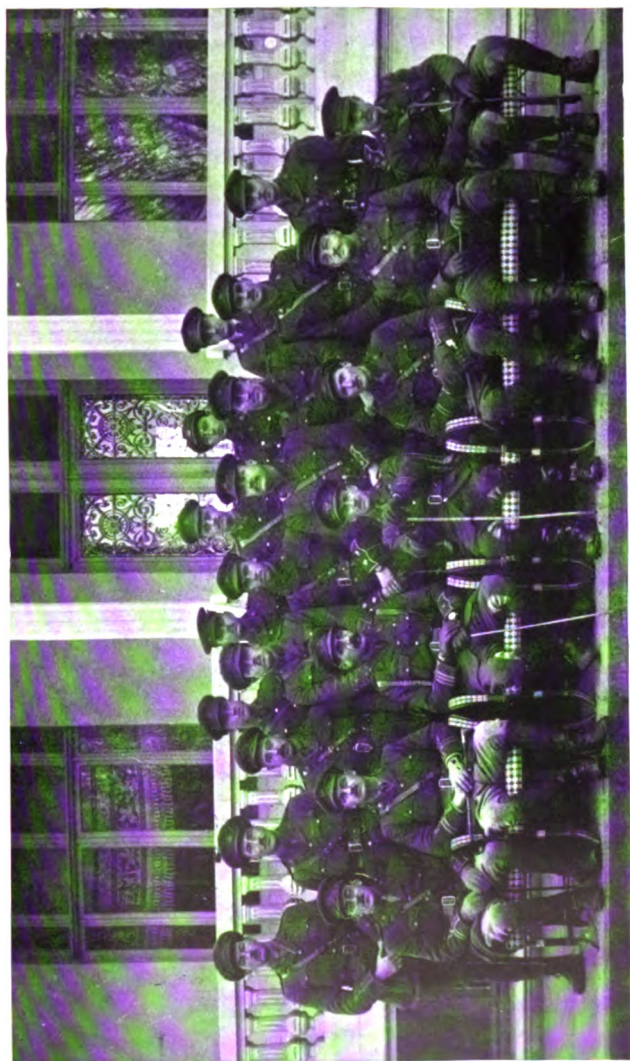
When the Battalion came out of the trenches on October 23rd it marched to Buire, where Lieut.-Colonel Fyffe relinquished command upon transfer to a home appointment. He was succeeded

by Lieut.-Colonel J. F. Radcliffe, D.S.O., of the 1st Devon. One mile north of Ribecourt, on October 25th, two battalions from each of the three divisions in the X Corps (5th, 51st and 18th) were inspected during a fall of snow by H.M. the King and President Poincaré, the parade being under command of General Maxse. The 10th Essex was one of the units chosen from the 18th Division. There were also present on that notable occasion the Prince of Wales and General Allenby, who had just been appointed to the command of the Third Army. On the last day of the month the Battalion (32 officers and 975 other ranks) went into the trenches again and found the hostile snipers very active. A great deal of repair work was necessary to the trench system and two sections of the Royal Sussex Pioneers and another of the R.E. were ordered to assist. On November 8th the enemy fired eight trench mortar shells into Dublin Street and blew in a dug-out of the machine gun section, killing a sergeant and one man. The Pioneers were employed all night rebuilding the portions blown in, whilst the Battalion had plenty to do in replacing trench walls which collapsed owing to the wet weather. The Germans were troubled in the same way, for one of them was overheard shouting to another that a dug-out had fallen in, whilst on another occasion a board was displayed upon which was written a statement that on and after November 18th the trenches were available to anyone who liked to have them. On November 19th the British snipers seemed at last to have got the upper hand and the making of snipers' posts and machine gun emplacements went on with renewed vigour. Three days later the enemy exploded a large mine. It formed a huge crater, which obliterated the front of the "Ilôt," then held by "D" Company, and unfortunately killed five bombers in a bombers' dug-out. The near lip of the cavity was immediately occupied and snipers' posts formed. The R.E. had arranged to blow in an enemy shaft at 4.30 and the men were being withdrawn, when, at 2.30, the enemy got his blow in first. The platoon in charge of the "Ilôt" suffered severely and Lieut. G. J. Thompson, in command, had a narrow escape. He was returning from the forward post when the ground opened and the debris rolled up to his very feet. He was thrown down by the concussion and when he recovered himself, to his amazement, there lay between him and the Company a huge crater. Happily, the situation was quickly appreciated at Company headquarters and aid was hurried up, with the result that the remnants of the platoon were quickly released from their dilemma. What had appeared to be a misfortune was, however, found to be otherwise when daylight came, for the crater had made the holding of the line easier. It formed a very good cover from view and gave the snipers a point of vantage over La Boisselle. The marksmen continued to improve in efficiency and accounted for four snipers' posts on November 23rd, whilst the feeling of confidence was

increased by the fact that the firing of "sausages" had become infrequent, which was put down to the work of the divisional howitzers. At the end of November the Battalion strength was 82 officers and 955 other ranks.

The 10th Essex had just entered the trenches on December 2nd, when a British mine went up in front of the "Ilôt," which was believed to have considerably damaged two attack galleries which the enemy had pushed out towards the right of the "Ilôt." Officers and N.C.O.'s of the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers were attached for instruction. The weather was very bad and the trenches were filled with mud. The enemy were suffering just as severely and, as a consequence, there was a decrease in activity on both sides. One sergeant was killed by a dug-out collapsing on top of him. A new method of revetting the firestep with drawn steel netting proved successful, whilst the installation of new cookhouses was very beneficial. Patrols sent out on the night of December 7th could find no sign of enemy movement; perhaps they felt secure in the wire defences of "Y" sap, which were formidable. When the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers took over on December 11th, the "Ilôt" had practically disappeared as a consequence of enemy mining activity, and the line was held by sniping posts cut into the top of the near lip of the craters. The Battalion returned in good heart and became divisional reserve in Albert, where the chief trouble was desultory enemy shelling.

Then the Division was taken right out of the area and on December 15th the 10th Essex marched via the Ancre Valley, through Treux and Mericourt l'Abbé to La Neuville, the western suburb of Corbie. The chief occupation was practice for the capture of an enemy salient upon a facsimile of the position, but after some strenuous days had been thus employed, orders came for the operation to be cancelled. Christmas Day—the first spent abroad—was celebrated in excellent spirit. There was a church parade at Corbie, after which the band occupied the bandstand in the square, and played cheerful music, subsequently heading the march to billets at La Neuville to the tune "What cheer, me old brown son, how are yer?" a popular melody with the Battalion. The chief course for dinner was to have been roast pork, but unhappily the local baker failed in his promise to bake the succulent joints and so the men had to "make do" with stew. It was a great disappointment, but Christmas pudding and the liquid accompaniment were there in unstinted measure, so that the respective feasts went quite merrily. In one company there were only two officers, so that the C.S.M. and Q.M.S. and the four platoon sergeants were invited to share the good things in the evening and of these, ere the war was ended, C.S.M. Mercer had won both the M.C. and D.C.M., and Sergeant Jaggs the D.C.M. and M.M. No. 5 Platoon, "B" Company, won the Brigade Football Cup on Boxing Day. On December 28th the Battalion marched to Albert and next morning



OFFICERS' GROUP, CORBIE, DECEMBER, 1915.

Back Row : 2nd Lieuts, Sheldon, Wearne, Bird, Turner, Lt. McKenzie, (R.A.M.C.)
 Middle Row : 2nd Lieuts, Hunt, Byerley, Evans, Lieuts, Chell, Archibald, Cooper, Neill, 2nd Lieut. Dalton, Capt. Hawkins.
 Sitting : Capt. Tween, Lewis, Major Scott, Lieut.-Col. Radcliffe, D.S.O., Capt. Meares, Wyeth, Womersley.

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occupied a sector of the line north of Becourt. The two communication trenches, Becourt Avenue and Berkshire Avenue, were almost impassable, so the Battalion had to march overland (to avoid the mud) by Meaulte, Becordel and Becourt, which was a fatiguing business and a long way round. The left company was on the fringe of La Boisselle and not more than forty to fifty yards from the enemy. The spot was named "The Glory Hole," because of its unsavoury reputation for mining and trench mortars, but the 10th Essex came to the conclusion that it was not as bad as the "Îlot." The enemy were not so near on the right, but anxiety was caused by a certain amount of "dead ground." "The trenches near La Boisselle were chiefly in chalk, and so held but two or three inches of mud; those farther south were in a heavy dark soil and so were deep in mud. Only the tallest men were able to pass along this front line in high waders and get no liquid mud in their boots. The Colonel was a little man and he disappeared in the mud to a point quite half-way up his stomach. The front line was the worst. Company headquarters at one point were under a huge mine shaft-dump about 100 yards from the front line, a colossal mountain of white chalk burrowed from the bowels of the earth. This was the well-known Lochnagar Sap, which was successfully excavated at three different levels right under the enemy's front and support lines, and which shook him up more than a little when it was put up on July 1st, 1916." There was little doing, except the exchange of machine gun fire. The Battalion had its first experience of lachrymatory shells. On December 31st a mine was exploded, which blocked part of the trench, but it was cleared during the night. There was much firing on both sides and 1916 dawned with the divisional artillery actively engaged. The Battalion had a strength of 35 officers and 985 other ranks.

On January 3rd a limited number of steel helmets were issued and equally divided between the two front line companies. An officers' patrol, under 2nd Lieut. Corke, had an exciting experience on the following day, when it suddenly encountered an enemy patrol. The latter was saluted with a grenade, which caused an immediate retirement. Lieut. Corke went out again the next night with two N.C.O.'s and 13 men, intent on trapping the hostile party, but although they waited four hours, they had to return without sight of a German.

Some of the difficulties of trench life were placed upon record ere the Battalion marched into clean and good billets at Buire. Retaliation by the trench mortars was very good, but it was not easy to get prompt reply by the howitzers owing to the absence of direct telephone communication. The greater part of the front line trenches was in a very bad state, having from two to three feet of mud. Labour duty was onerous, for large fatigue parties were required for mining and for the

construction of bomb-proof dug-outs. The system of supply worked more easily than previously because the ruins of Becourt Chateau in a wood formed an admirable dumping ground. Most of the main communication trenches were moderately good owing to the extensive floor boarding of the trenches and the provision of sump gratings.

There was active training at Buire, in what were then new features of warfare, camouflage and gas attack, after which, on January 14th, with a strength of 35 officers and 924 other ranks, the Battalion went again into the line, with two companies in the front line, the third in support for counter-attack and the fourth in reserve. Three days later the War Diary records with satisfaction that the British trench mortars had obtained ascendancy and there was evidently more ammunition available, to judge by the artillery retaliation. 2nd Lieut. Hunt's patrol went across No Man's Land on the night of January 17th, but though they found some German straps, there were no identification marks on them. Two days afterwards Lieut. Hunt's patrol again went out and found a cap belonging to a man of a Baden regiment, whilst on January 20th Lieut. Meares' patrol found an officer's water bottle, but with no identification mark. The Battalion was relieved on the night of January 22nd by the 6th Royal Berkshire and went by way of Berkshire Avenue into brigade reserve at Albert. The 10th Essex were back in the line on January 29th, with a strength of 34 officers and 914 other ranks.

COMMANDING OFFICER KILLED.

On the night of January 31st the Battalion suffered a great loss, the commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel J. F. Radcliffe, being killed. Patrols on duty the night before reported that there was activity in the German trenches and in the afternoon the divisional 4.5 howitzers fired about fifty rounds in the direction of Mametz. The enemy retorted, about 4.30 p.m., upon a dump at the junction of Lochnagar Street and Kingsgate, the fire increasing in intensity until 5.15 p.m. and being mainly directed upon the salient on the Battalion's right front. Whilst this was proceeding, it was afterwards ascertained, a small party of Germans assembled in the dead ground preparing for a raid, which caused the Battalion to man the fire positions. This was accomplished without casualty except in the case of a section of "B" Company, occupying a dug-out in a communication trench just behind the front line. A shell blocked the entrance and when a man managed to get free he was made prisoner, as, in due course, were twelve of his companions (one was killed), who had been left without arms by the shellburst. About a hundred yards of front line trench had been blown in and the German raiding party had entered in the wake of the shellfire. They were not there more than ten minutes, for they were quickly



*LIEUT.-COL. J. F. RADCLIFFE, D.S.O.,
killed, January 31st, 1916.*

discovered by Lieut. Tollworthy's platoon and retired under their fire. But that incident did not end the Battalion's misfortunes. The hostile bombardment lifted and struck the roof of the telephonists' dug-out by a direct hit. The commanding officer and adjutant were there at the time. The roof fell in and a heavy beam struck Colonel Radcliffe, crushing his head, the other occupants, officers and signallers, escaping with a shaking. The cannonade still increased in intensity and the difficulty of the situation was complicated by the fact that every wire was cut and communication had to be carried out by runners. The fire continued until 6 p.m., when nearly every gun of the 18th Division was engaged in giving the enemy a taste of what it had given. The disturbance died down, upon which patrols went over almost up to the hostile wire and found that the Germans were very busy. A working party, aided by a couple of platoons of the Royal Sussex Pioneers, commenced construction of a new front line. Next day the front line dug-out was searched, when the dead Essex man was found. The casualties included, in addition to Colonel Radcliffe and the dead soldier, three others suffering from shellshock and 18 missing, subsequently ascertained to be prisoners of war. One of them, it was learned, was a traffic control man from Albert and he had come up into the trenches to take tea with his brother. "We hated having lost men as prisoners and for a time we were disliked for our misfortunes by those in authority. This was particularly galling, after being complimented but a short time before by the G.O.C. as the best battalion in the Division. But the German 'travelling circus,' as the party who performed these stunts up and down the line was called, was the temporary grave of a good many reputations. Several months afterwards it was agreed at a big conference at the Third Army School that it was well nigh impossible for a unit to protect itself against these well organized and executed incursions. In our case the 'rifle-on-the-parapet' order rendered any man shut in a dug-out or shelter entirely defenceless." The last-named reference was to a Third Army order that rifles should at all times lie on the parapet in the firing position belonging to its owner, the idea being that in case of an alarm the man would rush straight to his position and take up his arms.

The loss of the Colonel was a severe misfortune. He was sitting talking to 2nd Lieut. Byerley and the Regimental Medical Officer when hit and it was afterwards recalled that at lunch that day he had been the third to light his cigarette from one match. His period of command was of undoubted value to the Essex, particularly in the inculcation of a proper pride in the Battalion. He had previously served twenty-five years in the Devonshire Regiment and had won the D.S.O. at Colenso in the South African War, where he was severely wounded in the leg. "Colonel Radcliffe was very proud of his command and on several occasions he avowed that he would not change

it for any Regular battalion. He pleased us very much, when, after about a fortnight's command, he, 25 years a Devon, appeared wearing not only Essex collar badges, but Essex buttons, too. He couldn't have paid us a better compliment. Many much younger Regular soldiers commanding battalions of other than their own regiments consistently refused to wear the badges of their command."

The Germans continued their raiding tactics a few hours later. A party of them suddenly appeared in front of the section held by the 10th Essex, clothed in British uniforms and wearing British gas masks, lulling suspicion by their use of the English language. They carried with them a red, yellow and black flag, which they planted on the ramparts. It had the following inscription: "Brave British Boys: Why will you fight for your bloated capitalists, who sit at home in armchairs and send you to death?"

At the end of January some observations were made in the War Diary respecting the returns of fighting strength which were sent to base every week. They showed the numbers of officers and other ranks borne on the strength of the Battalion, but they did not represent the personnel actually available for trench fighting. The numbers for that duty during the last two months had been 24 officers and 680 other ranks. Working parties for drainage and mining, together with details for Brigade and Division, represented a call upon the Battalion of about 270 other ranks.

Repair work was undertaken during February 1st, whilst patrols were constantly sent out, who reported sounds of German activity. Major H. L. Scott came back to the Battalion from leave in February and assumed command. A mine was fired close by on February 4th, which killed by gas fumes the O.C. 185th Tunnelling Company, another officer and 17 sappers. The Battalion went into billets in Albert on February 6th, with a fighting strength of 83 officers and 885 other ranks, and remained there until the 14th. Immediately after arrival, a mine was exploded in front of Fairmaid Street, which formed a crater. Before detonation the 4.5in. howitzers fired for half an hour at the German trenches in and to the south of La Boisselle, whilst immediately afterwards the eighteen-pounders opened with shrapnel on La Boisselle and the German trenches. The enemy replied with whizz-bangs and six-inch howitzers. There was considerable artillery activity on February 15th, and the next day the Battalion sustained an unusual casualty inasmuch as during stand-to the sentry over the ammunition reserve died of a tumour on the brain. The firing of "sausages"—several salvoes—and a howitzer bombardment constituted the chief incidents of the daylight hours of February 19th, whilst at night a number of red, green and white lights put up from behind La Boisselle were assumed to be associated with



*LIEUT.-COL. H. L. SCOTT,
who commanded 10th Bn. The Essex Regt. from
February to September, 1916.*



Thompson, Byrley, Hunt, Chell, Tollworthy. Emerging from a spell in the trenches.

aircraft, which were heard, but not seen. Trench mortar exchanges were frequent on February 21st, and the next day the Battalion marched into Albert, where a heavy fall of snow marked February 28rd. The next day work was started on the Usna and Tara redoubts, which were assigned as strongholds for Battalion headquarters and each to be garrisoned by a company. This task, undertaken in snowy weather, occupied the remainder of the month, though one observer doubted if the men would have worked so hard if they had known that they would be subsequently held by the Germans and that it would fall to the 10th Essex to clear them out again in 1918. On February 29th the Division was moved out of the line and the 58rd Brigade marched by the Albert—Amiens road, under the keen eye of General Maxse, into billets at Franvillers. The troops were destined for the Somme area.

The twelve days' stay in early March at the pleasant village of Franvillers was mainly devoted to training, with rumour rife that the Battalion was ultimately destined for Verdun. With the accession of Major H. L. Scott to the command, Captain J. L. Lewis became second-in-command and the new company commanders comprised Captains Dalton ("A"), Ridley ("C") and Banks ("D"). At this time, too, the Rev. D. Randell joined as chaplain, an association which lasted until the close of the war. "A certain percentage of all ranks was allowed to visit Amiens each day. In addition, there was the café at Heilly, where the three Graces, Suzanne, Marie-Thérèse and Lucienne, charmed the cares of battle away. Plucky girls these were. They had been driven out of their home near Brussels in the first tide of invasion and with their parents they instituted this little oasis for the weary sojourner in the land of Somme to keep the pot boiling until the evil times were past." Small drafts were received and then, with a strength of 38 officers and 890 other ranks, the Essex marched to Etinehem Camp on March 14th. Two days later they took over a section of the line at Maricourt from the 20th (King's) Liverpool. The Battalion had the 8th Suffolk and 11th Royal Fusiliers on the right and left respectively, with 8th Norfolk in support. The 10th Essex held the northern and eastern edges of Maricourt Wood, from the north-eastern corner of which a sap ran within thirty yards of the enemy trench. The garrison, three sections of a platoon, were not unduly worried, their chief anxiety being as to whether the enemy shelling would block the communication trench. At the other end of the line was Machine Gun Wood, the comparative quiet of which is best recalled by the names which were bestowed—"Honeymoon Lane" and "Cushy Corner." Colchester, too, was not forgotten, for some of the earthen ways were called "Long Wyre Street," "Lexden Road" and "Abbey Fields." In the woods the foliage was so thick that it was possible to walk about in security during daylight hours and pluck primroses,

bluebells and willow catkins. The Battalion went into support at Maricourt on March 21st and the Norfolks marched to Etinehem. The village had been extensively damaged by shellfire, but billets were fairly comfortable, particularly at the Chateau, which was so soundly constructed that the ground floor was still in use. The men were chiefly employed in improving the communication trenches and rat-hunting—the latter a diversion for the whole Division. It is said that the wits of the Bedford named two of the most celebrated rodents “Tom the Tunneller” and “Simon the Man-eater,” for they eluded most cunning traps. When the Essex went into the line again they put an entire platoon into the sap previously mentioned, having three companies in front, with the fourth in reserve. Snipers were active on both sides and on the last day of March a daring German aviator flew along the line, returned, and then went away towards Montauban.

A pleasing incident of the stay of the Division in this area was a petition of the inhabitants of Meaulte to King George. Some seven hundred still remained in the village and did so until the German inroad of March, 1918. They were fearful early in 1916 that they would be evacuated and when informed by the French authorities that their village was in British control, they forwarded a letter to the British monarch pleading that as the invasion of 1914 had prevented them from reaping their crops and the 1915 harvest was a failure, they desired to remain and gather the fruits of their husbandry in 1916. There was some hesitation in presenting the letter, but in the end the King received it. He replied through one of his private secretaries that it had been forwarded to Sir Douglas Haig. To the villagers' delight, they were subsequently informed that they could remain, though they were confined to their homes for three days on and from July 1st.

Wiring parties were busy at the saps on the night of April 1st and next evening the Battalion marched to Etinehem via Bonfray Farm and Bray, with platoons at 200 yards intervals. It was a long and tedious task and the last platoon did not arrive at its destination until 3 a.m. The 10th Essex were in divisional reserve and during the short stay particular attention was paid to gas warfare, instruction being given by Captain F. J. S. Wyeth, a former officer, but then of the 18th Divisional Gas School at Chipilly. On April 8th another move was made to the trenches, this time by way of Bray, Suzanne and Maricourt Valley. This new route apparently aided the relief, which was accomplished in four hours. A great deal of work was done in improving the trenches and Private Drane was killed whilst wiring. The patrols were daring and on the night of April 10th cut samples of the enemy wire and brought it back. Officers and men were frequently passing in and out of schools of instruction at this period, particularly in machine gun, grenades and Stokes mortars. The heaviest casualties for some weeks were sustained on April

11th, when a salvo of howitzer shells into the advanced sap caused the death of two men and the wounding of two others. Patrols were sent out that night all along the front and one, under 2nd Lieut. Wearne, sustained the loss of one man killed and another wounded. The German wire was found to be in good condition, whilst the movement of enemy transport was frequently heard. The hostile snipers were quiet and for three days they did not fire a shot. Then on April 14th it was noted that they had only fired twice in six days. Enterprising observers of the enemy wire again brought in specimens. The Germans retaliated by throwing grenades at A.P.1, which fell short, and in order to afford better protection a *chevaux de frise* was placed in front. Red and green rockets fired by the enemy caused much speculation and on the morning of April 15th a large grey-green smoke cloud was fired upon by the field artillery. Drafts arrived from the 12th Essex when the Battalion went into support in the Maricourt defences and garrisoned six strong points, capable of all-round defence. The enemy artillery, suspecting something was afoot, shelled vigorously and on April 19th killed one man and wounded another in Maricourt village, and then, shelling the Suzanne-Maricourt road, caught one of the Battalion's transport wagons, killing the driver and both horses. The Battalion was in line again on April 21st. 2nd Lieut. Wearne and four men went out on April 23rd and had a look at the enemy's sap thirty yards to the west of la Briqueterie Road, which they found well wired. Searchlights were employed by the Germans to detect French aeroplanes, but without success. Relief came on April 29th, when the 2nd Bedfords took over. Next day headquarters and one company were at la Houssoye, whilst three companies, under Captain C. M. Ridley, marched to Bray and found parties for the construction of a light railway two miles north-east of the town.

Headquarters and three platoons marched from la Houssoye on May 1st, for Longpré, which lay a mile and a half north-west of Amiens and where the billets were the best so far obtained. Two days later all ranks were inoculated and on May 4th they were joined by the remainder of the Battalion, who had been digging a light railway near Bray. They marched to Sailly-le-Sec, where the night was spent, and arrived at Longpré next day. Captain H. E. Hawkins was appointed town major of the town. A small draft joined from the 14th Essex and the remainder of the Battalion was inoculated. Brig.-General H. W. Higginson, D.S.O., Royal Dublin Fusiliers, took over the 53rd Brigade. An open piece of ground at Bertangles was selected to represent a section of the German line and on this site, during the early part of May, the Brigade effected a complete transformation. The chief amusement was the number of hares which were disturbed and the keen hunt which followed. "When the trenches were dug to a sufficient depth they were

named by notice boards and we were all bidden to learn these names without delay. Mine Ally, Bund Trench, Bund Support and Popoff Lane conveyed nothing to us, but Montauban Alley did give us some indication of the area in which we could expect to give battle." When the ground had been prepared, the battalions of the brigade were exercised and from the duty assigned to the 10th Essex they assumed that they were to act as support in the first day's operation. Benefiting by French experience at Verdun, General Maxse laid emphasis upon efficient "mopping-up," and so the support battalion sent forward with each assaulting battalion a platoon to see that the first position taken was cleared of the enemy. Other platoons, later on, moved forward to pay particular attention to communication trenches, whilst a third company supported points in the main attack. The fourth company carried up ammunition and assisted generally. Sound and systematic instruction in these particulars was afterwards held to have contributed mainly to the success of the Division in the attack of July 1st. Contact work with aeroplanes was practised, the paralysing effect of smoke cloud upon direction of attack was practically experienced and in a score of ways the training was made as near to the task which was allotted to the Brigade as it was possible to be. Days rolled by and good-bye had to be said to pleasant Longpré and its even pleasanter amenities. With Lieut. R. A. Chell as Adjutant in place of Captain G. K. Meares, promoted to the staff, the Battalion, with a strength of 34 officers and 985 other ranks, marched on May 3rd from Longpré by way of Daours to Corbie. Headquarters and two companies, the next day, went to Bronfay Farm in relief of 6th Royal Berkshire, and two companies, constituting brigade reserve, were moved from Corbie to Bray, and then, on May 25th, to Billon Wood, to succeed the two companies of the Berkshires there. Bronfay Farm consisted of a considerable range of buildings in an isolated spot on the Bronfay Farm—Bray—Maricourt road and which, although a mile and a half from the line, had suffered little from hostile bombardment. It proved a comfortable headquarters and was a noted centre of hospitality. "A" Company was attached to the 280th Field Company, R.E., for work on the Straw line, "B" Company was employed on mining fatigue at Carnoy and "C" and "D" Companies assisted 79th Field Company, R.E., to construct Spring Avenue, a communication trench, over a mile long, which ran from the centre of Billon Wood to Carnoy.

A change of occupation came on June 2nd, when the 8th Suffolk were relieved in the Carnoy sector. The Battalion was on the right of the frontage allotted to the 58rd Brigade for the assault and everyone was keen to learn all he could concerning the lie of the land. Great excitement was also caused by the capture of a German, the first to fall to the 10th Essex. It was achieved by the Scout Officer, 2nd Lieut. F. B. Wearne,

and three of his scouts, on June 5th. They rounded the man up quite expertly within the wire and received the thanks of the Brigadier. The German was a soldier of the 62nd Regiment and his capture was of some importance, as it was believed that the 12th Division, to which he belonged, had left the front. Wearne achieved a reputation as a plucky and resourceful officer. When he was wounded on July 3rd, however, he never returned to the 10th. They felt, nevertheless a fraternal feeling in the announcement made later that Wearne, serving with the 18th Essex, had won the Victoria Cross, though he lost his life in so doing. Work at nights was mainly concerned with bringing up rations and ammunition to dumps in readiness for the "big push." Then on June 10th the Battalion went back to Bray upon relief by the 8th East Surrey, of the 55th Brigade. For ten days the companies were distributed as working parties. They dug a deep cable trench between Billon Wood and Maricourt, worked under O.C. Divisional Signals in laying a cable line, dug in Billon Wood under 79th Company, R.E., and unloaded barges at Carnoy. All ranks were keyed up for the offensive, now close at hand.

BATTLES OF THE SOMME, 1916.

On June 22nd general and special instructions were issued to the companies and the next day the first operation order followed. The brief record of the remaining days of June until the memorable July 1st runs:—

"U" Day (June 24th).—Bombardment by heavy guns commenced. Enemy made practically no reply, only firing a few H.E. shrapnel (15cm.) between 10 p.m. and midnight. Our 2in. T.M. also very active against the enemy's wire. Headquarters moved from Bray to A1 Headquarters, Carnoy. Company work continued under 79th Co., R.E., chiefly digging of Lapree Avenue.

"V" Day (June 25th).—Bombardment continued. 2in. T.M. extremely active. During the afternoon two hostile observation balloons were brought down on our front by incendiary bombs dropped from aeroplanes. Aeroplanes also co-operated with the artillery during the afternoon and evening.

"W" Day (June 26th).—Bombardment continued. 2in. T.M. extremely active in early morning. Smoke used during heavy bombardment, which lasted from 9 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. Corps on our left used gas at 11.30 a.m. (reported later as very successful). At dusk the Battalion was relieved by the 8th Norfolk. On relief the Battalion went via Sheffield Avenue to Billon Wood.

"X" Day (June 27th).—Bombardment continued. Conference of company commanders held at 12 noon and 9.30 p.m. All final details for "move up" on evening of "Y" day arranged and orders issued. (On this day, too, the men were interested watching French gunners in the wood firing howitzers which had been constructed in 1872 and of which they made very effective use).

"Y" Day (June 28th).—Bombardment continued. Advanced parties moved forward in accordance with programme at 12.15 p.m. Brigade informed us that all infantry operations were suspended for 48 hours. The bombardment continued just the same. The enemy fired on Billon Wood with a mixed variety of shells during the evening and night.

June 29th was the day originally fixed for the assault, but it was postponed for 48 hours, hence the following further record:

"X" Day again (June 29th).—Bombardment continued. Enemy shelled Billon Wood slightly during the evening, first with lachrymatory, later with shrapnel. Two men wounded.

"Y" Day again (June 30th).—Bombardment continued. Advance parties sent into Carnoy in morning. Battalion moved up during evening and established itself in the trenches of the Carnoy defences.



OVER THE TOP!

The men were in the best of spirits, glad that offensive warfare was to succeed the monotonous round of the trenches. Each carried two grenades and extra ammunition. Battalion headquarters were in the front line and the place was already full of sleeping Berkshire officers, whom Colonel Scott would not disturb, for they led in the assault on the morrow and the Essex were in support. "We sat round the edges of two wire beds and snoozed off and on from 1 a.m. till 5 a.m. Colonel Scott read his novel—he always took one into action—till he fell off to sleep. At 5 a.m. we all had breakfast and I remember that tinned sausages from the canteen played a prominent part in it. We then went our respective ways. In three hours' time three of the four Berkshire officers had been killed!"

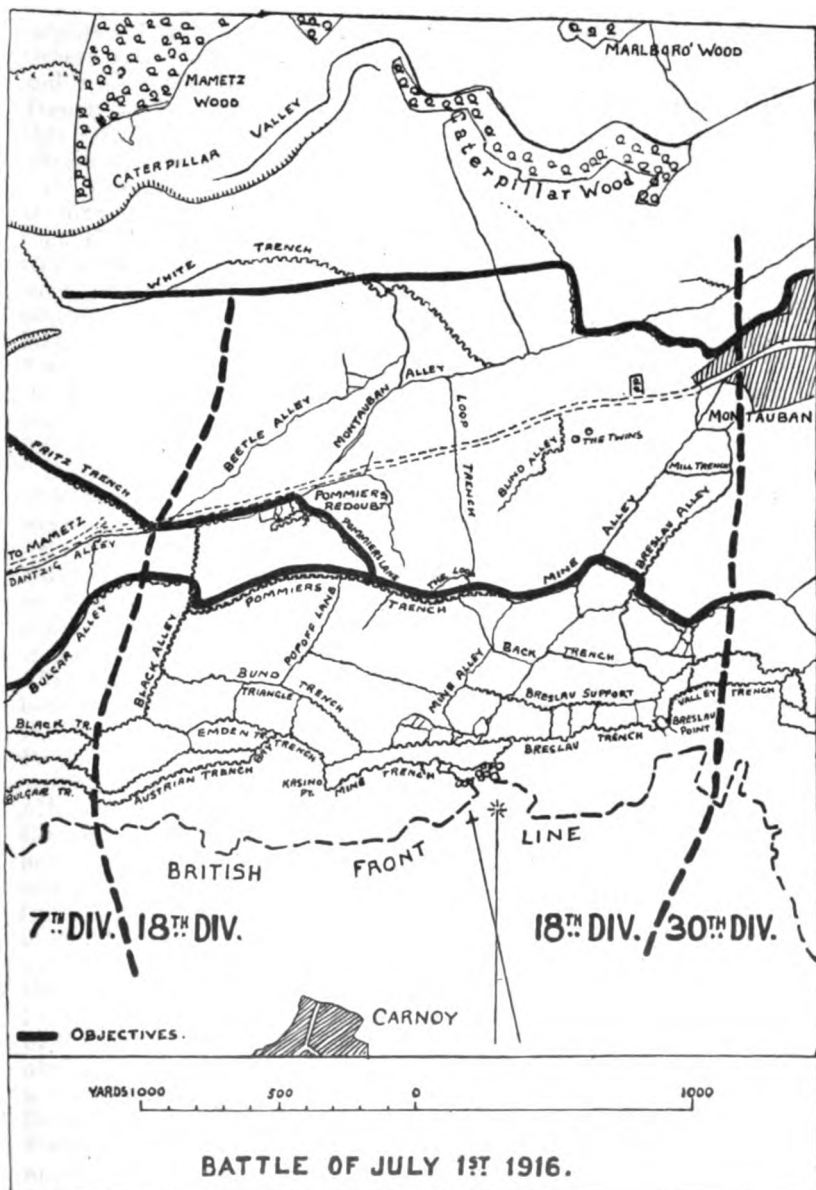
The 10th Essex officers going into action on that day were: Headquarters.—Lieut.-Colonel H. L. Scott, Major J. L. Lewis, Lieut. R. A. Chell (Adjutant), Lieut. D. B. Cooper (Q.M.), Captain W. A. Coates (M.O.), 2nd Lieut. L. W. Bird (Signals), 2nd Lieut. F. B. Wearne (Assistant Adjutant). "A" Company: Lieut. J. V. Jacklin, 2nd Lieuts. C. H. Walker, J. L. D. Howitt, A. D. Openshaw. "B" Company: Captain A. S. Tween, 2nd Lieuts. W. G. P. Hunt, H. D. Burton. "C" Company: Captain C. M. Ridley, 2nd Lieuts. T. A. Evans, A. C. Pochin, H. S. Gray. "D" Company: Captain T. M. Banks, 2nd Lieuts. A. M. Byerley, E. de Q. Mears, R. A. Cotman. Other officers were in reserve either at the transport lines near Bray or at the Divisional School near Corbie.

JULY 1st.

The 18th Division was one of the few that attained all its objectives on July 1st. It was part of the XIII Corps serving with the Fourth Army (Rawlinson) and it advanced 3,000 yards on a front of 2,500 yards, seized Montauban Ridge and the west end of Montauban village and captured Pommiers Redoubt. The Division on the right (80th), next to the French, also secured its final objective, the main portion of Montauban village—so that there was much pride and satisfaction in the XIII Corps that night. The Division had the 55th Brigade on the right, the 53rd in the centre, and the 54th on the left—thus all brigades were in line. The 55th was ordered to take a trench line about 200 yards north of the Montauban-Mametz road and also the western end of Montauban. It was in this Brigade that occurred the celebrated episode of the 8th East Surrey kicking a football as they moved forward. The idea was that of Captain W. P. Neville, "B" Company of that regiment, who adopted the scheme in order to occupy the men's minds as they went across No Man's Land. He presented each platoon with a football and offered a prize for the first who dribbled the ball into the German trenches. Neville was the first to kick the football towards the enemy on the fateful morning, but was

killed before he had gone twenty yards. The 53rd Brigade, in the centre, had the 8th Norfolk and 6th Royal Berkshire in front, with the 10th Essex in support and 8th Suffolk in reserve. A mine was blown at Kasino Point, which spread the chalk far and wide and wounded many men of the Essex and Berkshires. The men of the Brigade were, however, keen and eager and worked with perfect precision. The German front line was quickly passed. The 8th Norfolk went through Mine Support trench and the 6th Berkshire through Bund Support. The 54th Brigade also went forward on the left and in twenty minutes the Division was in occupation of Pommier Trench. A forty minutes' halt ensued before the second stage was entered upon. This period was occupied in mopping-up and dealing with isolated portions of trenches still held by the enemy. Then followed the taking of Pommiers Redoubt by the Bedfords and Royal Fusiliers, of the 54th Brigade, a gallant feat of arms, for the strong point was thickly wired, armed with machine guns and garrisoned by two stalwart German companies, who had been saved from some of the terrors of the preliminary bombardment by deep dug-outs. Nevertheless, the Redoubt was taken by 9.30 a.m. Men of the Brigade also penetrated a thousand yards beyond to White Trench. The other Brigades were equally successful. As the barrage lifted again, the 53rd Brigade quickly seized Loop Trench, running into Montauban Alley, and had obtained touch by 11 a.m. with the 54th Brigade at the north-eastern corner of Pommiers Redoubt. By noon they were close up to Montauban Alley, with the 55th Brigade also well up to time. The advance went on uninterruptedly and by 1.30 p.m. Beetle Alley, Montauban Alley and the western corner of Montauban were in our hands. Later on patrols pushed forward towards Caterpillar Valley and looked upon Mametz Wood, later the scene of much desperate fighting. The Division suffered 3,707 casualties, including 45 officers and 871 other ranks killed. Nearly 700 prisoners were taken.

The 10th Essex, who were in support, had two platoons each of "B" and "C" Companies respectively with the Norfolks and Berkshires, whilst the remainder of the Battalion was still accommodated in the Carnoy defences, with headquarters situated in the front line. The strength of the unit was approximately 645 rifles, excluding Lewis gun teams. The morning broke fine and at 5.30 a.m. the men were served with a substantial breakfast of hot tea and rum, with bacon and bully beef. At 7.27 a.m. a mine under Kasino Point was blown. The infantry attack was launched promptly to zero hour, 7.30 a.m., and the two leading battalions of the 53rd Brigade went over the top full of eagerness and with splendid vigour, the clearing-up platoons of the Essex with them. Ten minutes later the first prisoner was brought for interrogation at Battalion headquarters. He was a stalwart young Bavarian of the 6th Reserve Regiment, suffering from the effects of the bombardment. When being



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marched to the rear he saw the ruins of Carnoy Church and enquired if that was the place where he was going to be buried. Others soon followed. The uncertainty of war later crept in and whilst the Brigade observation officer reported Pommiers Trench taken, the Norfolks could obtain no confirmation, for they could get no news of their leading companies. Two hours after the first leap, at 9.30 a.m., the remainder of "B" and "C" Companies and "D" Company of the Essex went forward as arranged. News soon came through from "B" Company that Bund Support had been taken, but that the enemy was still holding the Loop, Back Trench and Boche Trench. Fighting went on and then, when telephonic communication had been established with Bund Support, the report was that the Loop had been seized, but that Back Trench was still holding out. Two minutes after noon the Norfolks reported that entrance to the Loop had been taken and that their leading companies were working their way up. The Brigade called for bombing parties for Montauban Alley at 12.35 p.m. and they were supplied by "D" Company from Bund Support. They went forward by way of Popoff Lane and Pommiers Lane. Meanwhile, "C" Company were busy constructing two strong points in Pommiers Trench. At 1.5 p.m. the Royal Berkshires reported that they had secured Montauban Alley up to its junction with Loop Trench. The right of the Brigade, however, was experiencing some difficulty in getting forward and it was not until five minutes to two that news was received from the Norfolks that they were pushing up Mine Alley and up Boche Trench to the Loop. By dint of much bombing, these places were cleared and held, "B" Company, of the 10th Essex, lending material assistance. An hour later the Royal Berkshires asked for aid to deal with the enemy at the northern end of Loop Trench, where it linked with Montauban Alley, and two platoons were immediately despatched from "D" Company, who proved most efficient. About 4.30 p.m. Battalion headquarters were removed from the British front line to Bund Support, near its junction with Mine Alley. From this point Colonel Scott visited all the companies in the line and found them in good fettle. At that time "C" Company was still working upon the strong points, "B" Company was in the Loop, whilst the remainder of "D" Company was in Bund Support. The headquarters of the Berkshires and Norfolks were respectively in Pommiers Trench and the Loop. There was a cheerful feeling abroad when the Brigadier paid a visit at 7 p.m. An hour and a half later the two platoons of "D" Company lent to the Berkshires reported their return and were put into the left of Pommier Trench. The C.O. of the latter unit spoke in highly appreciative terms of the help they had afforded. At 10.20 p.m. it was reported that the Brigade was holding the farthest points of the allotted objectives. There was an alarm close upon midnight from Caterpillar Trench, but nothing came of it. Touch

was found by the 10th Essex with the right and left respectively (7th Buffs and 12th Middlesex) and, what was even more welcome, was the receipt of rations, which had been carried up the Carnoy—Montauban road on pack animals. That is the dry matter-of-fact story as told in the Battalion's War Diary, but the thrilling events of that great day have been graphically narrated by the Adjutant (Lieut. R. A. Chell) and must be incorporated in any account of the part played by the 10th Essex on July 1st: About 7.20 a.m. our hurricane bombardment became a veritable whirlwind. All our lighter artillery and Stokes' mortars played to the utmost on the front line and close support trenches of the enemy system. This was the first time Stokes' mortars had been used "all-out" and their effect was at least spectacular; the air was full of toppling and turning cylinders at various stages of flight and yet other noises and excitements were in store for us in that ten minutes which preceded our zero hour. At two minutes to zero our tunnellers blew strongly-charged mines below the old minefield on our right front and below Kasino Point, slightly to our left; sappers simultaneously blew the charges to open the Russian saps they had made in preceding weeks as communication trenches with the enemy front line. Kasino Point filled the air around with lumps of chalk of varying sizes and a fair number of our men were injured by them. Our little shack was on the trench level and was quite open on the west side. Several hunks came into this den and the Colonel's servant, Hodges, who was standing at the opening, was almost stunned. He suffered badly from concussion for the rest of the day. As soon as the mines went up the assaulting troops went over the top and halted for a few seconds to get their line straight. The barrage lifted and forward they all went with cheers and yells straight for the Hun. The line 100 yards away was invisible for a time—there was so much smoke. Two platoons of our "B" Company accompanied the 8th Norfolk Regiment, two platoons of "C" Company the 6th Royal Berkshire Regiment. The remaining two platoons of each of these companies advanced an hour or so later to open up the two main communication trenches—Mine Alley and Popoff Lane. As "A" Company was carrying and helping the sappers, Colonel Scott was actually left with the Battalion headquarters and "D" Company as his command. Battalion headquarters were in it from the start. Bird and Coates (the M.O.) stood on a knoll just outside the shelter and yelled news to me; Colonel Scott examined prisoners. The first of these arrived about 7.35. He was an awful looking object, for he had been under our seven days' bombardment without relief and had had no wash or shave and very little food. I 'phoned his regiment, etc., back to the Brigade. What a lot of 'phoning and message writing there was to do that day! The battle went on well, particularly on the left. The 6th Royal Berkshire Regiment was in splendid form and nothing could

stop it. Its casualties were many in number—in officers extremely heavy—but it meant to get home and it did so. On the right the Huns seemed more troublesome and there was a hang up in Mine Alley. Certainly the Huns were thick there. Our moppers-up and trench-clearers helped enormously, for Tween, their company commander, was on the spot and he was always a sound man at handling a situation rapidly and efficiently. Every trench junction was a veritable strong point and the enemy contested every yard of ground. His officers at this time were of the finest that the German military machine ever produced. They fought skilfully and with magnificent bravery, and several inflicted heavy casualties on us by sniping from points of vantage in the rough weedstrewn ground between trench lines. One of them, outwitted at length and caught, absolutely refused to surrender. The “hang up” on the right did not last long. The progress on the left and help from our supports enabled the 8th Norfolk Regiment to get its second objective and capture many prisoners. The C.S.M. of “B” Company, Hammond, I think, by name, and two N.C.O.’s, Sutliff and Cox, were amongst those mentioned by Tween for doing excellent work. On the left Ridley had sent Evans and Pochin to mop up with the Berkshires. Evans was wounded at the outset, Pochin a little later; Ridley, himself, was wounded during the morning whilst supervising the work of his company. “C” Company was thus for a time in the hands of Gray, an officer who had joined us but ten days before. Gray, with that veteran, Sergeant Jaggs, as his acting C.S.M., carried on calmly and untroubled, and at 4 p.m. we found him in his correct line (Pommiers Trench). Cotman, full of Latin enthusiasm (he hailed from South America), was a little disgruntled by the fact that he had a fairly easy initial passage. So, entirely unsolicited, he took his platoon off to help the Middlesex take Pommiers Redoubt. Here he had a very satisfactory fight and did some useful work, and returned to his company with his platoon later in the afternoon profoundly pleased with himself. At this time the Berkshires were still fighting for their last objective, Montauban Alley, the last trench in the Hun first system of defence. By now they were almost without officers, and their commander, Colonel Clay, and their Adjutant, Rochfort, were taking it in turns to go up and organize bombing stunts to dislodge pockets of Huns. At this stage our “D” Company, under Banks, came along and rendered a great deal of assistance, for which the Royal Berkshires were profoundly thankful. Of course, it was our duty to do this, but the execution of duty even in war was liable to be accelerated or retarded by personal feelings. We always got on well with the Berkshires. By about 6 p.m. the fighting on our brigade front was over and our “D” Company stalwarts came back smiling and we set about sorting ourselves out thoroughly. Our job now was to consolidate and hold the

Pommiers Line (the Brigade's second objective in the morning) as the British second line. The Hun did not interfere with us, for we had penetrated his front to such a depth that what guns he had not left behind in our hands he had had to withdraw, and these were not yet again in action. One gun from Delville Wood (to the E.N.E.) fired at Pommier Trench occasionally, but, on the whole, a quiet night was passed on our front and by 9 p.m., 1st July, the Battalion was thoroughly reorganized and settled down. Archibald had come up from the transport and taken over "C" Company, and one or two others had taken it on themselves to come up off their own bat. Colonel Scott was kind enough to let them stay up. At 5 p.m. Bird had found a huge Boche dug-out in Mine Alley for our new Battalion headquarters. Later, when we had dinner (about 11 p.m., I think) we had excellent Hun sparkling water with our whisky. Everyone had endless chocolate. The only officer killed on July 1st was Captain H. E. Hawkins. He was in charge of the main brigade dump on the Carnoy-Montauban road, when an enemy shell exploded very close to him. He was killed instantly. Openshaw, Sheldon (attached M.G.C.) and Osborne (attached T.M.B.) were among the wounded.

July 1st had been a day of victory, but not of severe fighting for the 10th Essex. Ere the month had passed, they experienced their full share, with the heavy losses which it entailed.

The Division came out of the line on July 8th. During the greater portion of the week preceding that day the 10th Essex had been in the front trenches and were concerned with a most successful exploit in Caterpillar Wood. When midnight came on the night of July 1st-2nd the Battalion was told that it had to defend Pommiers Line to the last man and at 2.30 a.m. on July 2nd two companies of the Suffolks passed through who had been sent to support the Norfolks and Berkshires. The morning was fairly quiet, with the enemy showing no desire to retaliate, but the strengthening of Pommiers went busily on in expectation that the counter-attack would come. Sixty dead Germans were buried just outside Battalion headquarters, whilst more agreeable was the receipt of congratulatory messages from Army, Corps, Divisional and Brigade commanders. It became known during the afternoon that the Suffolks would relieve the Berkshires at 5 p.m. and parties of both Battalions passed to and fro at leisure above ground as if the enemy were non-existent. At 6.30 p.m. "D" Company was attached to the Norfolks for the purpose of occupying positions at the Loop and Pommiers Trench and between nine and ten p.m. the first indication of enemy activity was vigorous shelling to the right of Montauban. This went on at varying intervals during the night, though the 53rd Brigade had a fairly quiet time of it. July 3rd was as quiet as the day before. The Norfolks were relieved by the Suffolks, so that the latter unit held the whole of the front line, with the Essex in Pommiers sector and Norfolks and Berkshires in Carnoy. The

Battalion was warned during the evening to be prepared to take Caterpillar Wood, a long strip of tree clad land running parallel with the British front, but lying on the steep slope of the valley, so that it could not be seen from our trenches. The 10th Essex immediately set about making preparations and Colonel Scott and Captain Banks, of "D" Company, went up Montauban Alley and reconnoitred the ground as well as they could, for it was believed that snipers were there. Orders were that the occupation should be completed by 4.30 a.m. on July 4th, the idea being that there should be an unobserved advance to the edge of the wood and a quick rush to complete the enterprise at dawn. "B" and "D" Companies were allotted the task and they formed up in two waves in artillery formation in front of Montauban Alley, "B" on the right and "D" on the left of Caterpillar Trench, a communication way which the Germans had constructed to provide access from Montauban Alley to Caterpillar Wood. "C" Company was held in readiness to support the movement if required. The night was very dark and the companies were shelled to some extent as they moved up to the rendezvous and though for a time there was concern at the non-arrival of three platoons, they turned up just in time and all was ready without casualty. At 2.52 a.m. the operation started and at 3.20 a.m. Colonel Scott at advanced headquarters at the junction of Caterpillar Trench and Montauban Alley received the welcome news that the Companies had entered unopposed and had sent out patrols. It was rather a hair-raising experience, for the report was that opposition would be met with. Instead, the Essex found only abandoned artillery, including three field guns, an anti-aircraft gun, a Belgian gun and a machine gun. "Here, on this lovely July morning, our two isolated companies (for divisions on right and left were not up to this line) had a great picnic. Byerley, we heard, gave a grand concert, as the piano found in one of the shelters was in quite good condition. A sound outpost position was taken up on the south edge of the wood and sentries here had an excellent view of the southern edge of Mametz Wood on the left, the approach to the Bazentins on the ridge ahead and the valley to the right. The troops to man this position in case of attack rested in the valley in the front! Here they were well hidden and covered and, above all, could dress up in the silk underwear left behind by the Huns, collect the numerous abandoned pickelhaubes and sing to Byerley's music."

As day strengthened, there was no indication of hostile effort save spasmodic fire from a machine gun in the south-eastern corner of Mametz Wood. The companies established themselves upon a defensive line on the southern edge of Caterpillar Wood, but when not required they sheltered in Caterpillar Valley. Bombing parties, still feeling forward, reached Marlborough Wood without opposition and established a post there. There was much relief at 4 p.m., when telephonic communication

was effected with the 7th Division and thereafter matters quietened down, save for occasional breaking of telephone wires by enemy shells, though the linesmen were so prompt in repair that the inconvenience was slight.

The Battalion went into support on the rainy night of July 4th-5th, which prevented the removal of the guns as souvenirs, with "A" and "C" Companies holding Mine Alley, Back Trench and Breslau Alley, and "B" and "D" in the old front line in rear. Their duty was to be ready to turn out at a moment's notice in support of the 8th Suffolk in Montauban Alley, responsibility for the forward positions having been taken over by a battalion of the 54th Brigade. Hostile shelling increased in vigour, but this did not prevent a party under Major Lewis and Lieut. R. A. Cotman visiting Caterpillar Wood in the evening and taking away the Belgian gun, though, unfortunately, the other trophies were immovable. Relief came on the evening of the 7th by the 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers, and was completed in good time, notwithstanding the traffic congestion on the muddy Carnoy roads. The cheery Battalion spent the night at Bronfay Farm and on July 8th moved to the new and comfortable camp known as Grovetown, at Bray, where a small draft was received. Colonel Scott, on July 9th, complimented all ranks upon what had been achieved and read the congratulatory messages, whilst, by the aid of maps, the communiques were explained, so that the Battalion should understand the part which had been played. Church parade followed, the service being conducted by Rev. D. Randell. Bathing and the issue of needed fresh clothing occupied the rest of the day. Drafts joined to the number of 120.

CAPTURE OF TRONES WOOD AND DELVILLE WOOD.

Stubborn fighting was proceeding all along the line and the 18th Division were not to be long away from the hurly-burly of war. Trones Wood had changed hands time and again, but had been, it was thought, finally occupied by the 30th Division. On July 11th the 55th Brigade of the 18th Division was attached as reserve to the former Division, but nothing untoward was anticipated. On July 12th, however, it was reported that the Germans had recovered almost the whole of the Wood, except a small portion at the southern end. This was serious news, for the retention of Trones Wood was essential to safeguard the right flank of an attack which was to be undertaken on July 14th against the German second line lying between Delville Wood and a point north of Contalmaison Villa. In these circumstances the 18th Division relieved the 30th Division early on July 13th, with orders that Trones Wood must be recaptured by midnight. The 55th Brigade had relieved the 89th Brigade on July 12th and held the line from Maltzhorn Farm to the southern end of Trones Wood. This Brigade, with two battalions of the 54th Brigade, was detailed for the attack, which, despite desperate

efforts, was not successful. Another attack, in the early morning of July 14th, by the Brigade, however, drove the Germans out, owing much to the determined leadership of the commanding officer of the 12th Middlesex, Lieut.-Colonel F. A. Maxwell, V.C. News came in the early morning of July 14th that the 54th Brigade was also being put in and as a consequence the 53rd Brigade was moved up in support, the Battalion making its rendezvous in Billon Valley at 4.30 a.m. "The skies to the east and north-east were ablaze with gun flashes and alarm signals, the roads beside our camp were thronged with Indian cavalry moving forward to uncertain tasks, and amongst it we moved off as the van of the 53rd Brigade." The Battalion was to relieve the 7th Queen's in Longueval Alley and Bernafay Wood. Headquarters were eventually established at the north-western corner of Bernafay Wood. Dead lay thickly round about Longueval Alley and the stretcher bearers were busy the whole night long. July 14th was a most trying day. The Battalion—which had two companies in Trones Alley and the eastern edge of Bernafay Wood and two in reserve in Bernafay Wood—expected orders to attack at any moment, and it was not until 5.30 p.m. that information came that it would not be required. Shelling was considerable and the Battalion headquarters received five direct hits, though without dire result. "A" Company were the worst sufferers in Trones Alley, whilst "D" Company lost 2nd Lieut. E. de Q. Mears; in all some eighty officers and men were killed and wounded in forty-eight hours. At noon on July 15th the Battalion was ordered to have a company ready to occupy Waterlot Farm, but the movement was never ordered. On July 16th the Brigadier, with Colonel Scott and the senior officers, went to see the forming-up position for the proposed attack on Guillemont by the Essex and 8th Suffolk, but the operation was postponed for twenty-four hours and, upon relief by the 15th Cheshire, the Battalion went for a short rest in Billon Wood.

So far the 53rd Brigade had not suffered heavily in the Somme struggle, but it was soon to be taxed to the utmost in, perhaps the most stubborn wood fighting of military history, that at Delville Wood. The Battalion, with the rest of the Division, had expected to remain undisturbed for a few days, but orders and counter-orders quickly flowed in. At 4 p.m. on July 17th intimation was received of a move to Delville Wood, an order which was cancelled less than two hours later. A conference of commanding officers was held with the Brigadier on the morning of July 18th and a route received, but at noon the headquarters were informed that the projected operation was suspended at least another twenty-four hours. The Essex had been warned of an attack upon Guillemont, in which "A" Company to advance on the left of the Suffolks; "C" and "D" Companies were to act as clearers-up in Guillemont, coming from the rear of the 8th Suffolk. "D" Company was to

the southern edge of Delville Wood and, if not used up, to assist in consolidating the position when won. At 7 p.m. the Brigade moved to Bois de Talus and three hours later the Battalion had settled down in Carnoy Valley, opposite Bois de Talus, in comfortable shelters. Early on the morning of the 19th urgent orders came for the Essex to proceed to the Brigade rendezvous in Caterpillar Valley, whilst Colonel Scott rode to Maricourt for orders. By 3.30 a.m. the Battalion lay in artillery formation on the right of the Montauban-Longueval road near to Bernafay Wood, and an hour and a half later the commanding officer returned with the news that the 53rd Brigade had been lent to the 9th Division to retake Longueval and Delville Wood. The latter was roughly rectangular in shape, divided into more or less equal parts by a ride which ran east to west from Longueval and which was known as Princes Street. Another ride in the south side of the wood was named South Street. The Wood, with the exception of the south-western corner and part of Longueval, had been recaptured by the enemy as the result of a heavy counter-attack. The general idea was that the 8th Norfolk should clear the wood south of Princes Street and that the Essex and Berkshires, who had followed in their wake, should clear the northern portion of the Wood whilst the 8th Suffolk retook Longueval village. The detailed orders for the 10th Essex were that they should follow the 8th Norfolk and move forward an hour and a half after the latter's operation had commenced. The right of the Battalion would be on the eastern edge of the Wood and left on Regent Street, the 6th Royal Berkshire taking up the remainder of the line on that flank. "A" and "D" Companies were in the Battalion's front line, the latter with the eastern edge of the Wood to Bond Street as their objective and "A" Company from Bond Street to Regent Street. "B" was the clearing-up Company and was to follow 120 yards in rear of the leading line. "C" Company was in reserve south of Princes Street under the orders of Colonel Scott. As soon as the Wood was taken consolidation was to be commenced and each of the leading Companies had to construct a couple of strong points. The first company of the Norfolks left at 5.20 a.m. and the first company of the Essex moved off at 5.45 a.m. Up to this time no casualties had been suffered, because the German shellfire fell 180 yards short. The move along the Montauban-Longueval road was very slow and had died down before the rear company of the Essex had started. The road was in a very bad state, cumbered with dead and wounded and littered with the debris of war. The Brigade had to move more or less in single file all the way. The most pertinent reason for the slow progress, however, was the fact that there was only one entrance into the wood on the south side and that was under direct machine gun fire, so that the Norfolks, who had put three companies into the Wood, had difficulty in working forward,

though by hard fighting they managed to clear it to Princes Street and get as far east as Buchanan Street. It was impossible to follow the programme; it was a case where company and platoon commanders pushed on into the Wood and carried on according to the general sense of the orders they had received. By 10.80 a.m. the Essex were aware that all the Norfolks were in the Wood, but were held up between Campbell Street and King Street and required support. Forty minutes afterwards two platoons of "A" Company were in action assisting the left flank of the Norfolks. Colonel Scott went forward to the Norfolks and ordered his signalling officer to join him in the Wood with six runners. The fire was so intense on the Longueval cross-roads that Lieut. Bird reported with only one man, the remainder having become casualties. The commanding officer had barely arrived in the Wood and was in consultation with Colonel Clay, of the 6th Royal Berkshire, with their respective Adjutants, when a shrapnel shell burst in the air some two hundred yards away and a small piece of shrapnel hit Colonel Scott in the head just over the eye, causing him to fall into the arms of Captain Chell. Such was his imperturbability that his first act was to ascertain whether he had retained the sight by placing his hand over his other eye. The second-in-command, Major Lewis, was informed at Brigade headquarters, to which he had been attached, and meanwhile Colonel Clay took over command of the Battalion. "A" and "D" Companies were ordered to get into position as soon as possible, but not to advance north of Princes Street until the order was given. This was accomplished shortly after noon, but there was some difficulty in obtaining touch; in fact, communication with the 6th Royal Berkshire was not secured by "A" Company until about 8 p.m. Half an hour afterwards three efforts were successively made to move forward from the Princes Street line, but the hostile machine gun fire was too tenacious and our own heavy artillery had not lifted sufficiently. At 3.40 p.m. it was obvious that little progress could be made and that the men were already digging in on the Princes Street line, while the 7th Suffolk were also held up at the church. The inevitable was recognized at 5.10 p.m., when orders came to consolidate on the line and to hold tightly thereto. By 6.15 p.m. the company dispositions were known. The four companies were in front, under the immediate command of Captain Tween, with the Norfolks on the right facing east and the Berkshires on the left, in a south-westerly direction. A strong point was pushed out from the Essex and held by a corporal and ten men with a Lewis gun. The left was bent back so as to form a defensive flank towards Longueval, for the enemy were very active north of the village and in the north-eastern corner of the Wood. A platoon of about forty men was stationed in the Wood south of Rotten Row between Campbell Street and King Street for the purpose of counter-

attack. The front line was held by about 250 men, with two Vickers' guns and eight Lewis guns, the greater portion of which were so situate that they could fire along the northern front.

During the evening a message was received that the 76th Brigade was to attack at 3.35 a.m. and that to assist this movement no troops were to be north of Princes Street after 7 a.m. on July 20th. Fuller details were received and despatched about 1.30 a.m. by double runners to the companies, but unfortunately they did not reach "B" Company until 3.25 a.m., by which time the oncoming Brigade was in movement. The garrison of the strong point had been withdrawn after the first intimation of the intention to attack had been received. The bombardment did not start, as expected, at 1 a.m., and an hour later a number of the enemy were noticed crawling towards the line, evidently with a view to a bombing counter-attack at dawn. Efforts were made to communicate the information to the artillery, but without result, and then the covering bombardment started close to Princes Street. Hostile bursts of machine gun and rifle fire were noted and replied to, whilst large numbers of green and white rockets soared into the air. Intermittent bursts of fire occurred until 3.25 a.m., but no attacking troops had by this time formed up behind the Essex. Captain Tween was requested to put a N.C.O. at the junction of Princes Street and the eastern edge of the Wood to act as right guide of the attacking troops assembling there at 1.25 a.m., but as the point was not held by the Battalion and the message was not received until two hours after the N.C.O. should have been posted, no man was sent there. At 3.35 a.m. all firing ceased in expectation that the fresh troops were attacking from a flank, but half an hour later an officer and men from another unit came in from the Essex front, who alleged that they had been fired upon. They had entered the south-western corner of the Wood and worked round the left of the Berkshires towards Princes Street and there found it difficult on the wooded ridge to recognize the identification points. The enemy, too, were then forming up for a counter-attack thereabouts and the British artillery was also roaring overhead. A very confusing set of circumstances. Thence onwards the right attack died down, during which the temper of the troops had been hardly tried. Early in the morning of July 20th the Battalion took over a line from the junction of King Street and South Street to the eastern end of Princes Street, with the Norfolks on the right and Royal Berkshires on the left. On the night of July 20th-21st "A," "B" and "D" Companies were relieved by the 4th Royal Fusiliers. The latter unit was so depleted by casualties that it was too weak to take over the whole sector. "C" Company (Hunt), therefore, remained with it until its place was taken by the Black Watch the next night and during which time a great deal of hard fighting with the Germans occurred. The Battalion moved to Carnoy Valley and

then Grovetown Camp, Bray, reaching Longpré-les-Corps-Saints, a small town on the main line between Amiens and Abbeville, on July 22nd. The casualties for the series of operations had been severe, particularly on the night of the 19th-20th July. Four officers were killed—Captain Herbert Edward Hawkins (July 1st), Lieut. James Duncan Archibald (July 20th), 2nd Lieut. Edward de Quincey Mears (July 14th) and 2nd Lieut. Laumarin Saxe William Pearson (July 19th), whilst 19 other officers were wounded. Of other ranks, 75 were killed, 88 were missing and 402 were wounded. Three of the company commanders (Jacklin, Archibald and Byerley) were either killed or wounded, the Company Sergeant-Majors of "C" and "D" Companies (Gaster and Palmer) were killed and the leading Lewis gun N.C.O. (Ager) also fell.

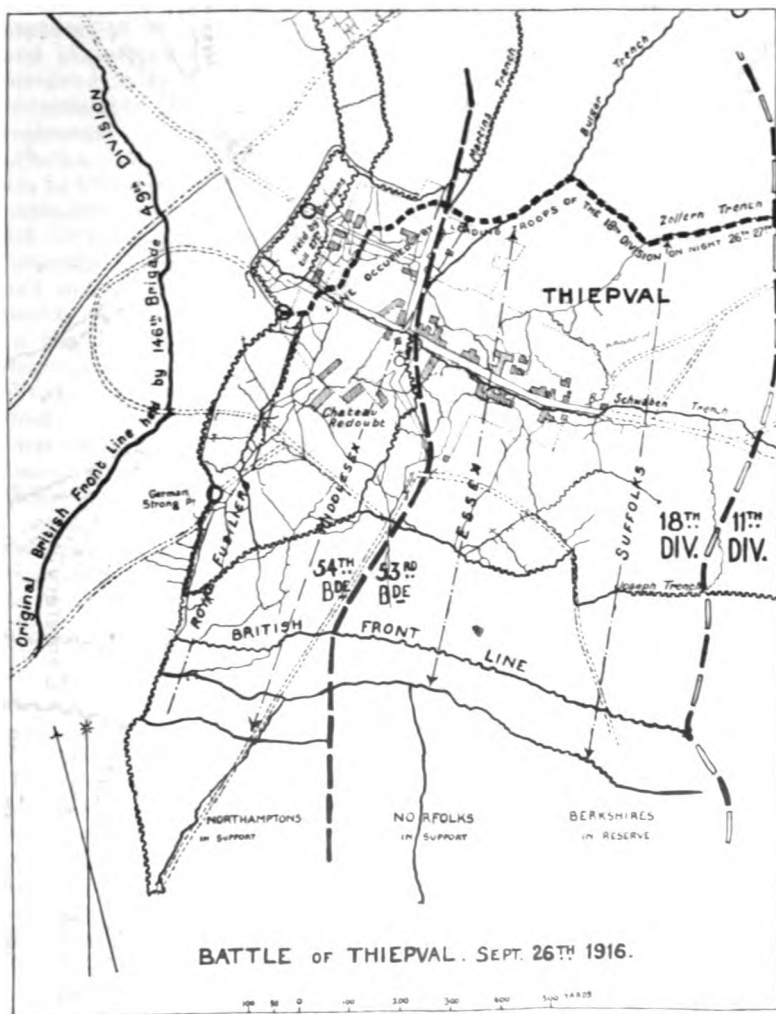
"I do not propose," wrote Captain Chell, "to give a long and heartrending account of those two dreadful days in Delville Wood—they were certainly the most trying I, myself, have ever experienced. During the first day the 53rd Brigade cleared most of the southern part of the Wood—originally set as the task of the Norfolks. The other battalions lost as heavily as we did. Everyone found the place nerve-racking. For a long time it continued to be difficult to get wounded away, but things became a bit quieter in the late afternoon, and certain parties of dismounted cavalry came to help our stretcher-bearers. About 4 p.m. our padre carried Colonel Scott down to Bernafay Wood. It was a difficult deed well done and one never to be forgotten by the survivors. The night of 19th-20th was somewhat noisy, and a noisy night in a Wood is not at all restful. Isolated Huns, both in Longueval and the Wood, put up streams of multi-coloured lights and so gave us a veritable Brock's benefit. Here and there little scraps took place and at one stage of the night the enemy threatened to rush our headquarters. Sergeant-Major Mercer deployed the servants, signallers and runners with such wondrous speed that we had ample defence. On the morning of the 20th other troops were hurried into the Wood to continue the attack. They had to form up in the dark in the middle of the Wood. Their task was more difficult than ours had been and their success was less. Almost a month passed before Delville Wood was completely cleared of the enemy. He could not be hustled out; a carefully planned and systematic attack, supported by artillery, was required. Our men were wonderful. The majority of all ranks who went into Delville Wood were 'original' 10th Essex. It was a very meagre skeleton that came out. . . . The 53rd Infantry Brigade's counter-attack on Delville Wood was the most miserable and at the same time most costly operation in which the Battalion took part during the time I was serving with it, and I believe no one will contradict me if I say that the Battalion never again played a part in any battle anything like so unsatisfactory as this one."

On July 24th the Battalion entrained for Arques, near St. Omer, from whence that night, after a hot meal in the open-air, the unit set out for Blaringhem, where billets were awaiting in the La Carnois district. "No other physical and mental rest can quite equal that of the first two or three days following a hard battle, spent in pleasant country in the sunshine. To lie on one's back in the shadow of a hedge and breathe the clear air and be worried by no one and by nothing—who could desire more?" At the battalion roll call on July 27th, held in order to ascertain the exact number and nature of the casualties at Delville Wood, 625 other ranks answered their names. Major J. Crookenden, D.S.O. (The Buffs), took over temporary command on July 28th, on which day the Battalion left for Lynde and arrived the day following at Mont des Cats—the hill town, which, from its elevation, was one of the most prominent features for many miles around. The strength of the Battalion at the end of the month was 24 officers and 818 other ranks, of whom five officers and 118 other ranks were on detached duty.

The divisional commander (General Maxse) inspected the unit at Godewaersvelde on August 1st, and on August 5th the Brigade marched from Meteren to Estaires—"a jolly little town," where the men made good bargains with incoming Anzac troops in souvenirs. The Battalion moved to Erquinghem, on August 8th, a western suburb of Armentieres, where baths were enjoyed in the vats of a disused dye works. There, also, a draft was received of 179 other ranks from the 8th Essex (Cyclists), which was augmented by another 60, on August 18th, when the Battalion was in tents about three-quarters of a mile south-east of Bailleul, in a field at the foot of Mont de Lille, where the whole Brigade was also concentrated. King George V visited the camp on August 14th and, in dismal weather, saw company training in progress. Training increased in intensity, varied by long route marches. On August 25th the Essex left Bailleul by train and went into billets next day at Chelers in the Third Army area—"a small, smelly village." They had a strength of 83 officers and 1,059 other ranks at the end of the month.

THIEPVAL AND SCHWABEN REDOUBT.

The Fourth Army made considerable progress in an attack on the right of the Bapaume road, which resulted in the capture of Morval, les Bœufs, Gueudecourt and Combles and was completed by the early morning of September 26th. This successful operation enabled Sir Douglas Haig to carry out the long-desired effort on the left of the road against Thiepval Ridge and Schwaben Redoubt. Before the enemy had time to recover from the effect of the reverse on the right, the Canadian Corps and two divisions of the II Corps (Jacob)—11th and 18th—were sent against these formidable strongholds. By the morning of the 27th September the village of Thiepval had been stormed and by



the afternoon of the following day Schwaben Redoubt had been entered and patrols were reconnoitring its northern face.

Major-General Ivor Maxse expressed his opinion of the feat accomplished by the 18th Division in the following words: "The captures of Thiepval Village and Schwaben Redoubt were distinct and important episodes even in a great European war. They involved in each case a deliberate assault and the capture of a considerable depth of intricate trenches defended by stubborn regiments who had held the ground against many previous attacks. After visiting the ground at leisure and in peace, I am to this day lost in admiration of the grit shown by the British battalions which fought continuously from 26th September to 5th October and conquered such strongholds as Thiepval and Schwaben." Thiepval was a village of some charm in situation and before the war was a favourite excursion centre for the residents of Albert. The Germans, however, had appreciated to the full its tactical value and they transformed it into a formidable fortress, garrisoned by the 180th Regiment of Wurtembergers. They had held it against all comers and had been made permanent custodians in reward of their valour and as an incitement to maintain their trust to the last. The regiment was based on Bapaume and the reliefs of Thiepval were undertaken from that town. "The men actually in Thiepval," we are told, "were survivors of the original first line troops of the German Army, high in spirit, intensely proud of their record and their regiment, of splendid physique and pledged to hold Thiepval to the death." The Ulster Division had been deployed against this position on July 1st and though they actually got to Schwaben Redoubt, the gallant Irishmen could not maintain themselves. The 18th Division became part of II Corps on September 8th and thereafter preparations went forward with meticulous care, including a lecture to the brigade and battalion commanders by Brigadier-General P. Howell, of Corps Staff. The field artillery of the Division had been attached to the 1st Canadian Corps, but as compensation the 18th were given the field artillery of the 25th and 49th Divisions and General Maxse also had a battery of 6in. howitzers under his direct orders. Four tanks were also allotted the Division. Meanwhile, the Corps artillery pounded away at Zollern Redoubt, Stuff Redoubt, Thiepval and Schwaben Redoubt, though they carefully refrained from obliterating certain of the trenches, which, if captured, it was essential should be consolidated and held against counter-attack. The preparation of the assembly trenches was ordered on September 21st and ere long two were available for the 58rd Brigade and three for the 54th Brigade, with Pip Street as the communication trench for the former and Fifth Avenue for the latter. In all, 2,500 yards of trenches had to be dug or extended for the use of the Brigades. A great deal of other preparatory work was also undertaken, including the

erection of a brushwood screen along the Authuille-Thiepval road, which proved a great boon, even though vulnerable to enemy artillery. On September 25th the headquarters of the 18th Division were transferred to Hedauville and all was ready for the effort against Thiepval. The British cannonade had almost wiped the village out of existence and an apple orchard, which had formed a prominent feature in front of it, was still visible, but sadly diminished. The chateau was a heap of rubble, but underneath both village and chateau ran a strong underground system, providing admirable shelter. From General Maxse the troops received nothing but confident encouragement and it was in this spirit that on the evening of September 25th the following message was circulated: "The 180th Regiment of Wurtembergers have withstood attacks on Thiepval for two years, but the 18th Division will take it to-morrow."

Zero hour was usually fixed at dawn or thereabouts, but in the case of the 18th Division General Maxse put it at 12.35 p.m., for he argued with much cogency that it was not desirable that troops should have more than two or three hours within which to consolidate before darkness fell, for in that way they escaped "observed" barrages, which so often proved very destructive. The 53rd Brigade was on the right, next to the 11th Division, and the 54th Brigade on the left. The first objective was Thiepval and the second Schwaben Redoubt. The leading battalions of the 53rd Brigade were the 8th Suffolk (right) and 10th Essex, the latter commanded by Lieut.-Colonel C. W. Frizell, M.C., who had recently joined. The 8th Norfolks were in support and provided the clearing-up parties, whilst the 6th Royal Berkshires were in reserve. The attack commenced punctually to time and the battalions moved across the 250 yards of No Man's Land at a slow walk, protected by a barrage which moved at the rate of 100 yards in three minutes at first and then up to 100 yards in two minutes. The Brigadier, with shrewd forecast of the German retort, did not fill up the assembly trenches immediately the first waves had jumped the parapet, with the result that the German guns battered an untenanted position. When the fire had ceased, then the Berkshires moved forward without serious loss. The Suffolks made excellent progress past Schwaben Trench, Zollern Trench and Bulgar Trench, but were finally brought up by a cross-fire from Medway Trench at about 2.30 p.m. The 10th Essex reached a point just beyond Thiepval village after considerable fighting, an advance of a thousand yards. In their case progress was materially assisted by the fact that a hostile machine gun was knocked out of action by the artillery. An hour's halt ensued and then the 53rd Brigade moved forward to the final objective, but in this effort they were not so successful, as the north-western corner of Thiepval had not been reduced by the 54th Brigade. Persistent efforts were made, but although some progress followed, instructions were



*Brigadier-General C. W. FRIZELL, D.S.O., M.C.,
who commanded the 10th Bn. The Essex Regt. from
September, 1916 to April, 1918.*



*Sergts. Bush, Brooks and Bishork
"round the old camp fire," in trenches
somewhere in France.*

received at 8.30 p.m. to consolidate the ground already in hand. The 54th Brigade had been meanwhile persistently hammering at its objective, which, though limited to a frontage of 300 yards, comprised the left half of Thiepval village, with the chateau lying in front, and also the enemy defensive system protecting their western flank, which was being turned by the movement from the south. The 12th Middlesex were deputed to capture Thiepval, whilst the 11th Royal Fusiliers cleared the left flank. The 6th Northants were in close support and the 7th Bedford, in reserve, were placed in dug-outs in Thiepval Wood. The two tanks which were attached proved most useful in dealing with hostile machine guns, but ere the day's fighting was done "Creme de Menthe" and "Cordon Bleu" sank in the mud and there and then abruptly ceased their part in the enterprise. The chateau was taken in excellent style and there was some inclination to mix with the Essex on the right. It was during this phase that two men of the Middlesex, Privates F. J. Edwards and R. Ryder, won the Victoria Cross, whilst another party captured the German telephone headquarters with twenty operators and others. The battalions entered the first objective on the right, but were not so successful on the left, and it was evident that before the final objective could be reached reinforcements would have to be sent up. The Germans fought with the most obstinate courage and the fire of all arms was incessant. When night fell the 53rd Brigade had the Suffolks and Essex in the Zollern line, the 8th Norfolk in support in the Schwaben Trench, with the 6th Berkshire busy carrying up supplies of food, water and ammunition. The three battalions of the 54th Brigade which had taken part in the advance were organized for the defence of the chateau under Lieut.-Colonel Maxwell, V.C. During the night the 7th Queen's, of the 55th Brigade, were placed at the disposal of the 53rd Brigade and the 1/5th West Yorkshires, of the 146th Brigade, were similarly detailed to the 54th Brigade, whilst the remainder of the 146th Brigade probed the enemy line in the country between Thiepval Wood and the Ancre. Bombing went on throughout the hours of darkness, but no further progress was made, for it was realized that the remaining portion of Thiepval, on the left, roughly corresponding to a rectangle, must be captured before any substantial benefit could be secured. The 7th Bedford were detailed for this task, whilst the 7th Royal West Kent, of the 55th Brigade, took their place in reserve in Thiepval Wood. Two companies of the Bedfords were in position by 3.30 a.m. on September 27th and by 11 a.m. had completed the striking success of the 18th Division, for the whole of Thiepval was in our hands, at a cost of 64 officers and 1,392 other ranks. A third Victoria Cross was won by 2nd Lieut. Tom Edwin Adlam, of the Bedfords, in this attack. Four officers and 606 other ranks of the enemy were taken prisoner.

The next step was the capture of Schwaben Redoubt. It was held to be better to retain the 53rd and 54th Brigades in the van and reinforce them with fresh troops. For this purpose battalions from the 55th Brigade and 1/5th West Yorkshires (49th Division) were placed at the disposal of the brigadiers. On the right the 53rd Brigade were allotted a frontage of 500 yards, the leading battalions being the Suffolks and Queen's, from the 55th Brigade, 10th Essex were in support in Zollern Trench, the Norfolks provided the "mopping-up" companies and the Berkshires were in reserve in Authuille Wood. The 54th Brigade had the more difficult part of the trench system to negotiate and had the Bedfords in the first wave, with a company of West Yorkshires, the remainder of the Battalion being in support. The West Kents were in reserve at Thiepval Chateau and Wood and North Bluff. The Buffs and East Surreys (55th Brigade) were in divisional reserve. The idea was that the Brigades advancing on the respective flanks should pinch out the German resistance, the objectives being indicated by numbered points. The advance was conducted with great spirit and enterprise and before the day had ended the 53rd Brigade was half-way across the Redoubt and the other Brigade had also bitten deeply into it. Many valorous deeds were done, one of the most notable being the accurate bombing of a machine gun post by Captain Longbourne and others, of the Queen's, which enabled them to rush it and capture 46 unwounded Germans. The Bedfords and the West Yorkshires (54th Brigade) also fought magnificently, the former having only two officers unhurt at the close of the day, the two brothers Keep. A bold enemy counter-attack from the north-west in the early morning of September 29th secured some success, but the hold on Schwaben was maintained. On the night of September 29th-30th the four battalions of the 55th Brigade were reunited in the front line with the Berkshires (53rd Brigade). The orders were to occupy the remaining part of the Redoubt and the high ground to the north. To effect this purpose, the Buffs and East Surreys were deputed to make the frontal attack, with the Berkshires and West Kents as custodians of the flanks. The Queen's were in reserve. The East Surreys shook off a determined German counter-attack, delivered as soon as they had taken over. The objective was secured, but again the Germans struck back, recapturing a point or two and retaining hold of the northern face of the Redoubt. The struggle ebbed and flowed for some days "in trenches knee deep in slimy mud, thick with British and German dead, the ground torn and shattered so that every landmark almost had disappeared." The Germans, with bombs and flame-throwers, achieved some success on October 3rd, but there was retaliation next day and when the 55th Brigade handed over to the 39th Division only the north-western corner remained in German hands. The 18th Division sustained nearly 2,000 casualties in the Schwaben fighting.

Let us now follow the fortunes of the 10th Essex. September opened with training in attack at Chelers, in which the 10th Essex and the 8th Suffolk were allotted the role of assaulting battalions, certain sign that heavy fighting was to be their portion, with the struggle still raging along the Somme front. It was the first time the Battalion was instructed in operating with a creeping barrage, represented by a line of non-combatants with blue signal flags waiking fifty to sixty yards ahead of the attackers. By way of Chelers-Sibiville, the Battalion made a three days' march to Acheux, where the monotony of training on ground west of Lealvillers was varied by the passage of parties of German prisoners to the rear. Billets were occupied at Bouzincourt on September 17th and the next day Lieut.-Colonel C. W. Frizell, M.C., took over command from Major Crookenden at Forceville, a camp one mile south of Acheux, which the persistent rain had turned into a swamp, whilst the roofs of the huts leaked and rats scampered everywhere. Colonel Frizell had served with the British Expeditionary Force as machine gun officer of the 1st Berkshire, which he commanded in the attack at Loos. There was a welcome move back to the old camp in Acheux on September 20th, and two days later the proposed attack on Thiepval was fully discussed at an informative conference at brigade headquarters. Practice attacks over a representation of the trench system to be assaulted were undertaken next day and on September 24th the 10th Essex were transferred to Crucifix Corner, Aveluy, marching first by companies and then by platoons. From Coniston Post the company commanders were taken to view Thiepval—"the brick portions we had seen in August, 1915, were now no more and, except for the blackened stumps of a well-known line of apple trees on the south side of the village, Thiepval was devoid of all other specific landmarks." The day before the attack until zero hour the first tanks were seen moving up Blighty Valley into concealed positions. September 25th was a day of conferences. In the morning the C.O. and Adjutant were summoned to Brigade headquarters, at mid-day orders for the attack were received, and at 2 p.m. officers commanding companies and the commander of the Norfolk company, attached to "mop-up," also discussed the details. Then at 5 p.m. the C.O. and Adjutant were again at Brigade headquarters to receive final instructions. When they were there the commander of the 54th Brigade came in and outlined his plans, which proved very helpful in enabling the scope of the operation to be grasped. The last conference was at 7 p.m., when the company commanders were given their verbal instructions. The C.O. was so satisfied that they were understood that operation orders were not written and everybody went to sleep instead.

At 5.15 a.m. on September 26th "A" Company (L. J. Beirne) began moving up to the assembly trenches, followed by "D"

(G. J. Thompson), "B" (F. W. Goddard) and "C" (Hunt). This was effected by double sections at two minutes intervals. It was a fine, bright morning and the men were in the best of spirits. They went by way of Authuille Wood, Wood Posts and Pip Street, the main communication trench. When the old German front line was passed Brig.-General Higginson was there to wish the Battalion luck. With the three "mopping-up" platoons of the 8th Norfolk were attached machine gun and trench mortar sections. The unit was in position at 8 a.m. and at 10 a.m. gas alert was ordered, whilst five minutes later watches were synchronized. An early dinner was being eaten as the C.O. was making a final visit to the companies. At 11.50 the Battalion was informed that some men of the West Riding Regiment who had been cut off in a former attack might be found near the apple trees; then at 12.35 the guns started forming a screen of shell sixty yards ahead and under cover of it the companies left the trenches. There were three objectives—the first was Schwaben trench, running along the south of Thiepval, the second was the northern edge of the village, and the third was the north side of Schwaben Redoubt, an advance in all of a mile and a half. Observers reported to Battalion headquarters at 1 p.m. that the companies were moving forward in excellent order. The tanks apparently created a great deal of alarm at first among the Germans, who mostly fled upon their approach. At 1.10 p.m. prisoners began to arrive—"the rapidity with which crowds of prisoners came down the valley from Thiepval and Authuille Wood was a wonderful sight. There seemed to be as many prisoners as attacking troops." At 1.28 p.m. news was received that the first objective, Schwaben Trench, had been seized and at 2.20 p.m. that the northern edge of the village had fallen at 1.13 p.m. Thereafter the news was not so good. An hour's halt had taken place in the second line, but when the forward move began again the 54th Brigade met with tough opposition and the Essex had to face considerable machine gun fire from the north-western part of the village. At 3.8 p.m. the advance was definitely held up and this was confirmed by a message, timed at 3.35 p.m., that the Battalion was 600 yards short of the final objective and suffering much annoyance from snipers whom the enemy had left behind in Thiepval. At 5.30 p.m. orders were given to consolidate the position gained and to reorganize. It was anticipated that another barrage would be put down on the final objective and that the troops would make another effort, but this proposal was cancelled at 6.20 p.m. and the second objective was fixed as the limit for the day, together with any ground beyond which had been seized. "C" Company and "D" Company were in the front line at 7.45 p.m., with the left flank in the air. "A" and "B" Companies, which had lost all their officers, were in support. An officer was sent to each to carry on. The Norfolks were to be called on for immediate

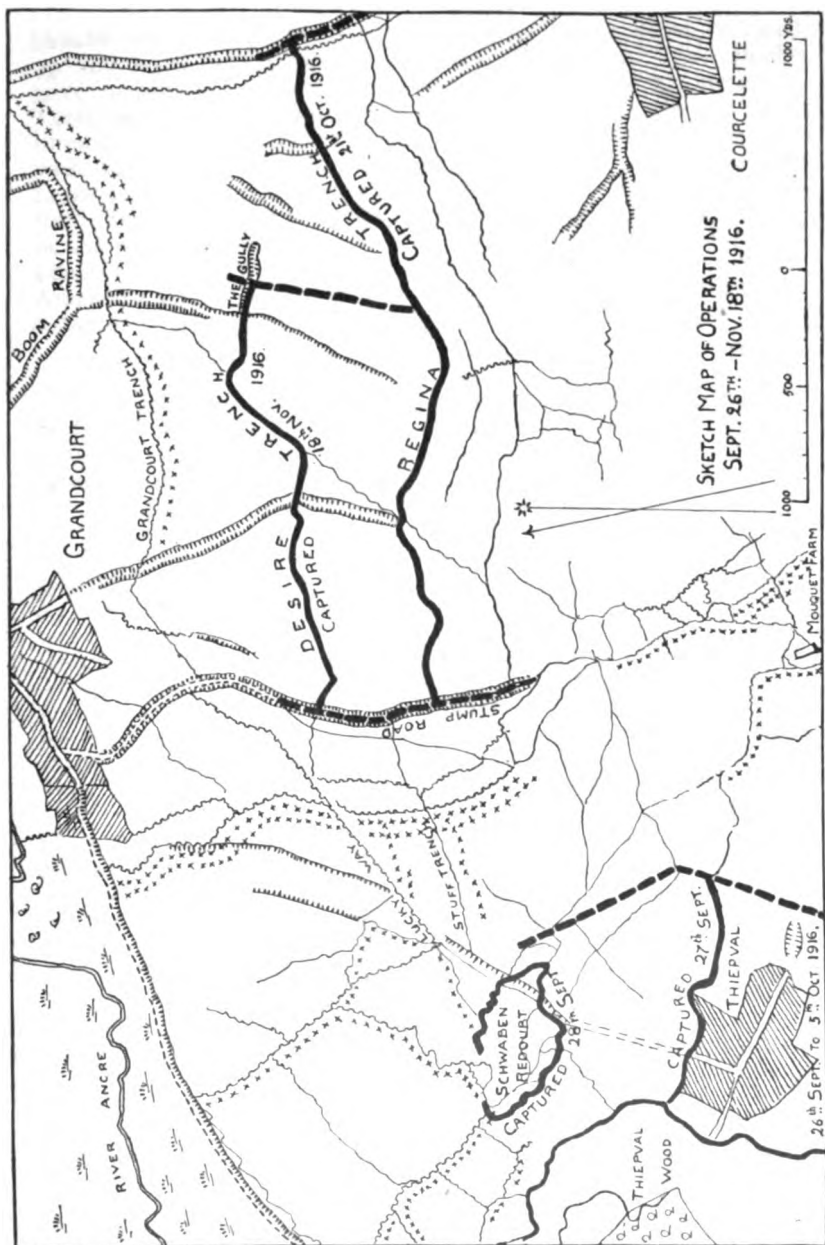
support. By 10 p.m. touch had been established with the Suffolks on the right and the 12th Middlesex on the left. Battalion headquarters were not able finally to settle down until 1.30 a.m., for further operation orders were expected, but none arrived. The Essex were disappointed that they had not reached Schwaben Redoubt, but, in common with the rest of the Division, they had made a notable advance of a thousand yards and captured 800 prisoners.

Next day Battalion headquarters were established in Thiepval, some 300 yards from the front line. Hostile shelling went on with great activity on Wonder Work and Hindenburg Trench, and bombing fights were plentiful in Martin's Lane and Bulgar Trench. Wonder Work was an advanced post, but as every wire was cut almost as soon as laid, a sheltered valley on the right was utilized and a wire laid connecting it with Thiepval, which remained in use until relief by the Berkshires. It was the only wire which was working and was invaluable when an attack was made later. On September 27th the Battalion line was extended on the left, but during the afternoon the Suffolks were relieved in Schwaben Trench and the vicinity in preparation for the attack of the latter and the 7th Queen's. A plucky enterprise was led by 2nd Lieut. D. H. V. Dray. A bombing party attempted to rush a machine gun emplacement on Bulgar Trench, but failed to make progress, as the trench mortars were falling so short. The battery was placed in a new position. The emplacement was then occupied, but it was discovered that it had been abandoned and replaced by a block, manned by bombers and a machine gun, 150 yards away. The attackers were fired upon from this stout enemy work and had to withdraw. There was further excitement during the night when an abandoned tank received three direct hits and blew up. On September 28th a patrol in Bulgar Trench found a formidable block, with the garrison of which a lively exchange of hand grenades ensued. The leading N.C.O. tried unsuccessfully to rush it with his men. A German officer who was captured stated that the patrol had caused a loss of one officer and eight men. Another assault by the Queen's and Suffolks took place that afternoon and on the same day the Essex went to the old front line and then to billets in Forceville. "We were glad our commanders were pleased with us; we were delighted to hear the name of our Division was in everyone's mouth from the Commander-in-Chief, who called personally at Divisional headquarters to congratulate General Maxse, to the traffic control man in Bouzincourt, who, on finding we belonged to the 18th Division, said, 'Well, you ain't supposed to go along this road in that direction, but seeing as 'ow you took Teepval, you shall.' On the night of the 29th September we wanted but two things in the world, viz., a good hot meal and undisturbed slumber. When we arrived at Forceville we found both." The losses of the Battalion were considerable. Four officers were killed—

Lieutenants Arthur Campbell Pochin, Sydney Richard Bonney, Leslie Frederick Cooke and Clarence Howard Walker—and five wounded. Twenty-three other ranks were killed, 157 wounded and 15 reported missing—a total of 204. Included among the killed was a great fighter, C.S.M. Mercer, M.C., D.C.M. The strength of the Battalion on September 30th was 28 officers and 681 other ranks, in addition to which four officers and 108 other ranks were on detachment at Acheux.

On October 2nd the Battalion was complimented by Brigadier-General Higginson upon its behaviour in the recent fighting and he was heartily cheered in return. Next day the unit left Belle Eglise station in a goods train for Candas, where it detrained on a muddy field and left almost at once for Montigny-Jongleurs, which was reached at 6.15 a.m. on October 4th. "It was a poky and somewhat smelly little place. The name was the only beautiful thing about it." However, it was a rest area and for a few days, in fine autumnal weather, the relief from the strain of the front line was much appreciated. On October 12th the Battalion marched for Montrelet and then by way of Herissart to Albert, which was reached on the afternoon of October 14th. Early on the morning of October 17th the Battalion left Albert by platoons and took over the line near Courcellette. Whilst doing so, a platoon was knocked out by a bomb from a hostile aeroplane, there being only three survivors, one of whom was saved from a serious wound by his shrapnel helmet. The platoon was led by 2nd Lieut. A. J. Southcott and had reached a point on the road formerly known as Bapaume Post, marching at ease and singing, when a heavy bomb fell and exploded about three yards to the left of the centre. The aeroplane was not sighted, for light was poor at 5.40 a.m. and a heavy mist was rising from the river. After the explosion, which wounded the officer, killed one man and wounded 17, the survivors commenced bandaging the wounded, with the aeroplane hovering low and dropping another bomb to the right. The catastrophe to the platoon of the 10th Essex was accidental, for the objective was obviously the camps on the right and left of the road, in both of which lights were burning.

The line taken over by the Battalion stretched from Courcellette trench to the left and was held by "B" and "C" Companies, with "A" Company in Sudbury trench, ready for counter-attack, and "D" in reserve in Zollern trench. That night two patrols were sent out, commanded respectively by Lieut. J. A. B. Thompson and Sergeant Culver. "They knew that a gully lay in front of Regina Trench and that sniping fire came from that direction, but it was not known whether the gully was held in force. Crawling up to the gully, the subaltern and sergeant noted much uncut wire, they also saw a dead horse, and then, looking into the gully, perceived a number of dug-outs. Whilst they were debating in whispers whether they



SKETCH MAP OF OPERATIONS
SEPT. 26TH - NOV. 18TH 1916.

COURCELETTE

should search the dug-outs, a German infantryman popped up his head five yards from Lieut. Thompson. The Boche gave a yell and Thompson shot him dead with his revolver. Then, zigzagging to avoid the burst of German rifle fire that immediately broke out, the pair scrambled back." Thompson was able to give the valuable information to divisional headquarters that the wire had not been cut by the artillery fire. Sergeant Culver subsequently received a commission in the regiment and won the M.C. at Irlles. During the German offensive in March, 1918, he was taken prisoner and was with the American officer who was shot by the German sentry for going outside the wire of the camp after the Armistice had been signed.

STRUGGLE FOR REGINA AND DESIRE TRENCHES.

The 53rd Brigade was next put in to complete the capture of the Hessian system, Regina and Desire Trenches still being in enemy possession, and an effectual bar to the command of the Ancre. It was at first proposed to attach it to another Division, but General Maxse persuaded Higher Command to leave control of the operation to divisional headquarters, so that although the 53rd Brigade only was employed, it was as part of the 18th Division. The assaulting battalions which took Regina Trench on October 21st were the 10th Essex and 8th Norfolk, and their work particularly pleased headquarters, for it proved that the men who had replaced the losses were the equal of their predecessors. At least 250 Germans were killed and 315 were taken prisoner, with five machine guns. The Brigade's total casualties were less than 300. The Battalion had become well acquainted with this portion of the line, for the men had already had one turn of duty there expecting orders to go over, which, however, had been postponed. "B" and "C" Companies were allotted the task for the Essex, and, in line with the Norfolks, at 12.6 they moved forward. In twenty minutes they had possessed themselves of Regina Trench, supported by an excellent barrage, though lacking the smoke screen, which could not be put up owing to the wind being unfavourable. When the attack was launched the enemy shelled the assembly trenches and did not pay attention to Regina Trench until an hour later, which gave the battalions an excellent chance to dig in. Over a hundred prisoners were taken, including a dozen of the enemy, who entered the trench not knowing it had been occupied. Everything went perfectly throughout the remainder of the day, though for forty-eight hours after the capture the Battalion suffered casualties from shellfire from Loupart Wood. Two additional machine guns were sent up to Regina Trench at 5.30 p.m., for enemy activity was noticed on Grandcourt Ridge, but nothing happened. That night patrols reported that no signs of the enemy were to be detected four hundred yards from Regina Trench. So uncertain was hostile action that at 9 a.m. on

October 22nd "C" Company found German stretcher-bearers parading in front of Regina Trench. They were taken prisoner and utilized to convey to the rear the body of a flying officer whose aeroplane had been brought down close to the Essex position. Enemy fire became more intense during the day and the British artillery was also hard at it, supporting the reconnaissance of large numbers of aeroplanes. Two strong points were established notwithstanding heavy gunfire, which severely damaged Regina and Vancouver trenches. On the afternoon of October 23rd the enemy were reported massing some two hundred to three hundred yards in front of Regina Trench, but it turned out to be a false alarm. Shortly afterwards the 7th Bedford came in to relieve the Essex, who, very tired and dirty, occupied billets in Albert. They had lost six officers wounded, 18 other ranks killed, 102 wounded, and 19 missing.

"The conditions of existence during this Autumn campaign of 1916," wrote Captain Chell, "were hard and trying. Our base, Albert, was seven miles away and between this town (very overcrowded indeed) and the line there was no decent dry accommodation. The condition of the front line was naturally very bad, for it received alternating showers of rain and high explosive without interruption. The tracks up, too, had not yet been properly organized and laid. More often than not, therefore, we arrived already wet, after a seven miles' march, to hold a very wet and muddy trench. On relief we had to get back to Albert. Some power kindly put three or four 'buses on to ply between Owillers and Albert during our relief, and these did help our worst cases of fatigue and feet greatly. Remember, too, that for the most part it was physically impossible for anyone to lie down in the line—drowning in mud would have been the result! Even Albert itself was dreadfully muddy at this time; in the gutter outside our billets in the Rue d'Aveluy it was quite nine inches deep." On one occasion Lieut.-Colonel Frizell and the Padre found two men buried up to their shoulders. They had fallen into the trench when the enemy started shelling, had been unable to extricate themselves and had gradually sunk, no one hearing their shouts. They had to be pulled out by means of ropes tied round them.

Preparations were being made for the taking of Desire Trench, but this time the 53rd Brigade was not used for the assault. It was in divisional reserve and the 10th Essex in brigade reserve. By platoons at five minutes intervals, the Battalion took over from the 8th East Surrey on October 29th, finding the Fabeck Trench very sticky from recent rains. "Then on October 31st the companies, in small packets of five or six men, moved on to relieve the 6th Berkshire in Regina Trench. That same afternoon, during the relief, the sad loss was sustained of Captain Christopher Mellor Ridley, who was killed by a direct hit from a shell, which also slightly wounded another officer. The Captain was buried

near Battalion headquarters in Zollern Trench." October ended with 19 officers and 641 other ranks serving with the Battalion, the casualties for the month having totalled over 200. Patrols, under 2nd Lieut. E. H. Brown, reconnoitred three hundred yards of No Man's Land on November 1st, but were then held up by artillery fire. Patrols the next night worked forward 350 yards, but still no enemy was observed, though on November 3rd a small working party was dispersed. About this time the Battalion lost its falsetto singer, named Shelton. He was clearing out his portion of the trench when his pick pulled the string of a German bomb, which burst and shattered his leg. Captain Chell met him coming down on a stretcher smoking and smiling. "I left him smiling; he died very shortly afterwards from shock and those who were back where he died saw the same smile to the end. I'm sure there were many Sheltons in the 10th Essex." The Battalion went back in an exhausted condition on November 3rd, by motor 'buses from Ovillers. One man with a Lewis gun was found leaning up against a lamp-post asleep! On November 4th they marched slowly to billets in Warloy. The rest was short, for on November 9th the Essex were back in Rue d'Aveluy, Albert, where gum boots were issued and the men's feet thoroughly massaged prior to a further tour of the trenches.

The 10th Essex relieved the 6th Berkshire in Regina Trench on November 13th, two hours before the great attack in which the Naval and other Divisions took Beaumont Hamel, Beaucourt and St. Pierre Divion. There was an intention, if possible, that the 10th Essex, with the 53rd Brigade, should exploit the opportunity and take Miraumont. Poor visibility prevented the attempt being made. The sector of Regina Trench held by Captain Hunt's company was badly damaged by enemy fire from a north-easterly direction. This notwithstanding, Captain Hunt went out with a patrol to examine a ravine which lay close to Regina Trench. He found that Desire Trench, which was to be assaulted on November 18th, ran into the valley just north of the Ravine and was apparently unoccupied, though it seemed to link up some smashed dug-outs or gunpits. Wire was seen on the skyline and a sniper was observed at the junction of Desire and Cross Trenches. Other enemy works also appeared to have suffered heavily from bombardment. The 55th Brigade took over the line on the night of November 18th and then the Essex went back to Tara Hill, where General Maxse explained the results of the victory achieved by the Naval Division. Albert was once again the headquarters on November 16th, the chief excitement being a bombardment by enemy long range guns, which, however, was not of serious consequence. The Battalion was in Albert when the 55th Brigade, in conjunction with the Canadians (right) and 19th Division on their left, on November 18th attacked Desire Trench in a snowstorm at dawn. The Canadians penetrated beyond the trench and the 55th Brigade

reached their objective, but as the 19th Division in the mist inclined towards the Ancre, a gap was formed in which the Germans pushed their machine gunners and cut off two companies of the Queen's on the left flank, who died fighting. The greater part of Desire Trench was taken and held, but on the left the attack was not so successful. The next day the Battalion moved to Vadencourt, for the Division was going out of the line, and there 2nd Lieut. E. B. Hill, attached to the 53rd Trench Mortar Battery, died of peritonitis. At the end of the month the Battalion had a strength of 16 officers and 649 other ranks, whilst one officer had died, one man had died of wounds and 16 other ranks had been wounded.

December was spent at Lamotte Buleux, on the edge of Crecy Forest, in which, apart from training, the chief incidents were the institution of a N.C.O.'s school, conducted by Major Tween, in which 64 passed through, and the arrival of drafts totalling 285 other ranks. There was a cheerful celebration of Christmas. A deputation was sent to Paris on a shopping expedition, as a result of which roast turkey was enjoyed, with a plentiful supply of beer, whilst at night the officers messed together for the first time since the Battalion had been on active service. On December 29th the 10th Essex marched to Millencourt-en-Ponthieu, and were there when the New Year dawned. The strength then was 83 officers and 1,042 other ranks, of whom seven officers and 110 other ranks were on detachment.

The first fortnight of 1917 was spent in practising crossing the Ancre and storming Miraumont. It was at this time that General Maxse was appointed to the command of XVIII Corps. His successor was Major-General Richard P. Lee, who had entered the war as C.R.E., 7th Division, and had been serving as C.R.E. Fifth Army (Gough). General Maxse's departure was greatly regretted, for the Division owed much to his fine fighting qualities, his zeal and untiring devotion to its interests. General Lee, as befitted the branch of the profession to which he belonged, had a sure eye for ground and a quick appreciation of a map, whilst, as a commander, "he had a settled distaste for frontal attacks; the large hauls of prisoners and correspondingly small casualties in the successful actions in the closing stages of the war can be traced to his determination to manœuvre." General Maxse's characteristic farewell to the Brigade ran: "Please thank all ranks for their congratulations just received. The honour conferred is merely a recognition of their gallantry throughout the battles of the Somme and the Ancre and it is quite beyond my power to adequately thank them or even to express in words how much I appreciate their magnificent performance. I beg you will let them know this and the pride I feel in having such a Brigade in the Division for two years."

The 10th Essex moved to Beaumetz on January 11th, next day to Gezaincourt, on the 14th to Herissart, eventually going to

Martinsart Wood, where Gloster Huts were occupied. The traffic from Bouzincourt to the Wood was extremely congested. "We wore more clothes by night than we did by day during our stay in Martinsart Wood," wrote Captain Chell. "The wooden huts in which we lived were of an old pattern and somewhat worn and draughty. Preparing for turning in was quite a performance! Finally every possible garment was heaped 'on top' in the hope that we would manage to sleep unfrozen through the night. What a thawing-out there had to be every morning! Water supply was none too easy and even the quick flowing Ancre was nearly frozen across. On the flooded marshes by Aveluy some of our Canadian friends indulged in hockey on the ice. These days in Martinsart Wood were quite enjoyable. Our work was mainly on roads and trenches. In every case the ground was frozen so thoroughly that a day's work could hardly be seen at all and there was no desire to slack, for hard work meant relative warmth. Tactically we were in reserve behind the 54th Infantry Brigade, who were holding the line at the time, but both sides were relatively quiet and, in consequence, we had an undisturbed twelve days in the Wood." Parties were provided for various tasks, including laying of pipe lines, unloading artillery ammunition and construction of train lines. The weather was very cold on the night of January 22nd. There were 18° of frost and the water supply having been frozen, fresh supplies had to be carried up from Albert. Captain G. K. Meares, M.C., formerly Adjutant, who had been employed upon staff work, was appointed G.S.O.3 to XIII Corps. A draft of 80 other ranks reported on January 27th, when orders came to march to an encampment of Nissen huts, known as Warwick Huts, on the roadside just east of Authuille Wood. Three companies took over there, whilst "D" Company marched to dug-outs in Thiepval, rejoining the Battalion the day after. This company was attached to the 6th Royal Berkshire during the whole period the Battalion was in support to this unit, which was in the section of the front line with which the Essex were familiar, viz., Desire Trench, south of Grandcourt, to Miraumont. The frost continued to be very hard, so much so that digging operations were practically suspended. The weather was dry, however, and the health of the men good. The Battalion strength was 87 officers and 1,170 other ranks, of whom 12 officers and 205 other ranks were detached.

In the early evening of February 2nd, with the moon shining brightly, the Battalion took over from the Berkshires, with two companies in the front line, the third in readiness for counter attack and the fourth in reserve. Battalion headquarters were in Zollern Trench.

ON THE ANCRE.

Service in this area brought the 18th Division into action early in 1917 and it was prominently associated with the

series of operations which caused the enemy to loosen his hold upon the Ancre and led subsequently to the withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line. In January the Germans were cleared from Beaumont Hamel Spur and the way opened for the occupation of Beaucourt Valley. The western slopes of the spur beyond from opposite Grandcourt to Serre were exposed and preparations were made for the occupation of the crest. The 63rd Division made excellent progress on the night of February 3rd-4th, which later caused the enemy to retire from Grandcourt and the trench system thereabouts. The 32nd Division was successful in an attack on the night of February 10th-11th in the Beaucourt Valley. This created the opportunity for a larger operation for the capture of Serre, which lay in a pronounced salient. It was undertaken by the 2nd, 18th and 63rd Divisions on February 17th. Considerable success was obtained, the infantry reaching a point within a few hundred yards of Petit Miraumont. This battle was known in the 18th Division as that of Boom Ravine. It was remembered, too, for another reason, and that was that it was the first day of the thaw after the great frost. "The hard surface of the ground turned first into one big slide and then became a sea of mud, in which rifles and machine guns got clogged and through which the infantry pressed a slow, floundering, stamina-testing way. . . . Since the arrival of the Division on 16th January, the General had reiterated the imperative necessity of pushing forward the water supply and of laying light railways and duckboard paths. Four thousand yards of shell-churned wilderness separated our front from the head of the Nab Valley road. Forward of this were no signs of a metalled road. More than once General Lee, a pick over his shoulder, was to be seen walking with a staff officer, generally Major Guy Blewitt, D.S.O., prospecting for a road which appeared on the map which was issued, but nowhere else. And had it existed it would have been covered with frozen mud, with on top of that a four inch layer of snow. But these expeditions never disclosed more than, perhaps, a track upon which the Boche had laid a sprinkling of chalk and flints leading from the Ancre valley to some old German gun positions behind the Zollern line." Boom Ravine was a sunken road which ran first south-east from the Ancre Valley and then south to West Miraumont road. About midway it intersected what was known as the Ravine, the southern end of which was well within the British line. The 18th Division, on the left, had as the limit of the objective the railway running to Petit Miraumont, whilst the latter town received the particular attention of the 2nd Division (right). The 54th (right) and 53rd Brigades of the 18th Division were employed in the assault. Grandcourt Trench ran along the whole of the front. The Ravine and the greater part of Boom Ravine were allotted to the 54th. The 53rd, who had the 6th Berkshire and 8th Suffolk, with two companies of

the 8th Norfolk in front, were to take a sunken way, known as Sixteen Road, leading north from their position to a series of trenches, curiously named Tea, Coffee and Rum. Folly Trench, the jumping-off place for the left of the 53rd Brigade, had been seized by the 10th Essex some days before February 17th. They found it unoccupied owing to the enemy retirement from Grandcourt. The Germans delivered an initial blow by an annihilating bombardment which smote the troops as they were forming up. It struck the 11th Royal Fusiliers with such fury that before the men went over the top only two of fourteen officers remained to lead them. Other battalions also suffered heavily, but the platoons, nevertheless, carried on and achieved a stimulating success, testimony to the qualities of leadership animating all ranks and the high state of discipline of the 18th Division. The Royal Berkshire, on the left, reached the railway line and captured 160 prisoners, whilst their companion battalion, the 8th Suffolk, cleared the Ravine with great dash. "It was one of the 53rd Brigade's greatest days." On the right the resistance was more determined, the enemy counter-attacking with spirit. Nevertheless, Miraumont Hill was reached and a firm hold maintained. The enemy was relinquishing his grip of this part of the territory, which fact the 7th Buffs were quick to notice on February 23rd, when South Miraumont Trench was found to be evacuated. The retrograde movement went on with increasing celerity, the British troops being eager to get at grips, but delayed by the mist and mud. When the enemy went back to the Le Transloy-Loupard line they held the village of Irles as a salient, with a well-designed series of trenches connecting it with Loupart Wood and Achiet-le-Petit. Irles was seized on March 10th by the 2nd and 18th Divisions, a brilliant little exploit in which the 53rd Brigade played a prominent part. The 8th Suffolk had taken Resurrection Trench on the outskirts of Irles, on March 6th, and opened the way to the 10th Essex and 8th Norfolk, of the 53rd Brigade, who caught the enemy in the morning as he was making preparations to leave in the evening. Sixteen machine guns were captured, with 68 prisoners, the latter number exceeding the casualties. The occupation of Grevillers and Loupart Wood followed. There were still more substantial gains later on at Bapaume and Peronne until the advance was stayed before the Hindenburg Line.

Now for the part played by the 10th Essex. When the Battalion took over from the Berkshires on February 2nd, the line was quiet, but the Essex patrols were very active. On the night when the unit went in, 2nd Lieut. A. Carpenter led a party of three men from the junction of Sixteen Road and Grandcourt Road, who worked due north until they were fired upon, when they retired. After a stay of twenty minutes, intently listening, they crawled forward again for thirty yards and watched Folly Trench. A party of the enemy was observed to be wiring and

another making preparations as if setting out on patrol. On the morning of February 3rd-4th Corporal Elms took out three men and they reconnoitred the west side of Sixteen Road to a point eighty yards south of Folly Trench, where the patrol was challenged and fired upon by a hostile working party. They found the wire in front of the eastern end of Folly Trench to be fairly good. The reason for this close observation upon Folly Trench, which connected Sixteen Road and Grandcourt Road, was that a scheme was being prepared to raid it as a preliminary to a later operation, which aimed at permanent occupation. The raid was timed for the night of February 4th-5th and the objective was three hundred yards in width. "C" Company detailed two platoons for the task, with three Lewis guns. No. 1 gun, with two bombers and two riflemen, was the flanking party on the right of Sixteen Road, with instructions to keep a keen look-out for the enemy and not to move back until the raiders had left the trench. No. 2 gun performed a similar duty on the left of Grandcourt Road, whilst No. 3 gun moved in rear of the raiding platoons and took up a position from which the crew could cover their withdrawal to Desire Lane. No. 1 Party consisted of six sections (2nd Lieut. A. Carpenter and 36 other ranks) and No. 2 Party of two sections (2nd Lieut. A. D. Whiting and 16 other ranks). The German posts were stronger on the right. At 1 a.m. the artillery opened a barrage on Folly Trench and communications, but unfortunately this was not as effective as desired, the raiders suffering some casualties therefrom. No. 1 Party had its right on Sixteen Road (with Lone Tree as a mark), whilst No. 2 Party had its left on Grandcourt Road. Both parties went over at seven minutes past one in extended order, with intervals of five yards, the two waves being at thirty yards distance. The men carried rifle and bayonet and one bandolier of ammunition, every other man also having a wire-cutter. They had two bombs each, except the bombers, who had ten. The distinguishing mark was a white band on the left arm, with a band of similar colour on each arm for the officers. No documents, letters, maps or identity discs were taken. The duty of the first wave was to enter the trench, whilst the second wave stopped at the parapet in support of their comrades. Lieut. Whiting's party, on the left, entered the western end of Folly Trench and found a bombing post, but no enemy. They made their way towards the eastern end, where two Germans were encountered, one of whom was killed and the other taken prisoner. The raiders reached Grandcourt Trench, where they found the wire thick and high. The party then made their way back across the Grandcourt Road, where the men waited in shell-holes until the hostile artillery fire died down, after which they returned to No. 10 Post in Desire Trench, which was reached at 2.10 a.m., luckily without casualty. Unfortunately, the leader of the right party (2nd Lieut. Carpenter) was wounded by shrapnel in the

foot in the early stages of the raid, which deprived the men of their leader. As a consequence, the raid at this point was not as successful as had been hoped. The party found the wire of Folly Trench in good condition, but got no farther, for considerable fire was opened upon them from two points.

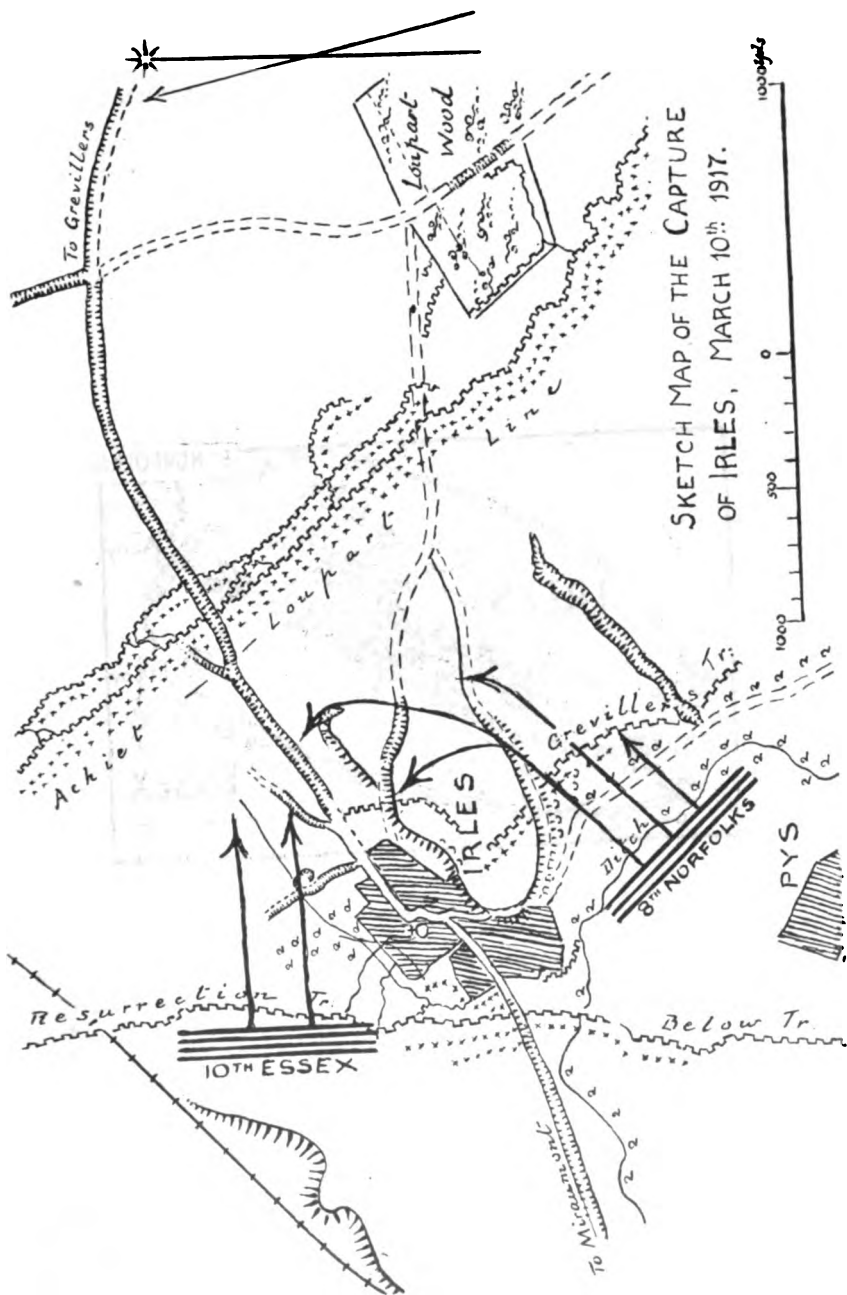
On the night of February 6th strong patrols were sent out under Lieut. J. A. B. Thompson and 2nd Lieut. J. G. Culver respectively, who reported that the enemy were still either in possession of Folly Trench or in its vicinity, though not in great strength. The 10th Essex were ordered to occupy the Trench on the night of February 8th-9th. "C" Company (right) and "A" Company undertook the operation and were formed up in four waves upon a frontage of 450 yards. They went over at 1.30 and in nine minutes were in the trench, which the enemy left without making any resistance. The only casualties were a few wounded by "shorts" from the British barrage. Two strong points were formed by "C" Company, one of them at the junction of Folly Trench and Sixteen Road, and a third by "A" Company at the junction of the Trench with Grandcourt Road. The remainder of the Company then went on up Grandcourt Road, where a platoon established itself at the junction with Grandcourt Trench. The first part of the latter trench was unoccupied, but a patrol quickly found that the remaining portion was held, with snipers operating between Grandcourt Trench and Folly Trench. Another patrol entered Grandcourt and established contact with the Naval Division. Before dawn two platoons were withdrawn from each company into support at Hessian Trench, the front line at that time extending along Folly Trench from Sixteen Road up and over Grandcourt Road. Later on a small patrol, under 2nd Lieut. L. Coulshaw, worked north from a post in Grandcourt Trench and then east in an endeavour to get round a German strong point. They got within a few yards of Sixteen Road, when they were stopped by fire from a number of the enemy who were covering a wiring party.

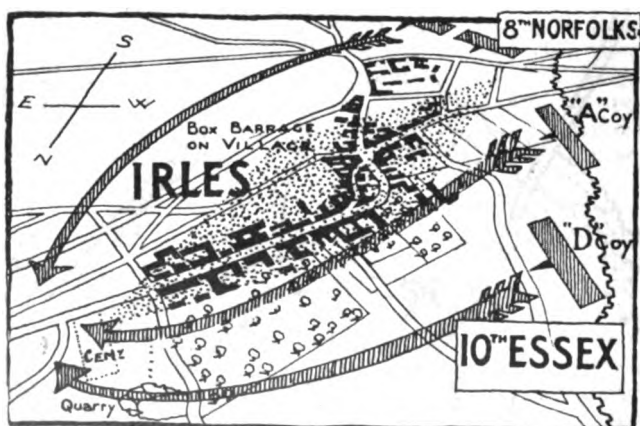
On February 9th the Battalion was relieved and went into huts at Martinsart in frosty weather. Six days later (15th) it moved on to St. Pierre Divion, where a most elaborate system of enemy dug-outs was used for billets. Extensive preparations were made for the attack on February 17th, in which the Essex were in reserve to the Suffolks and Berkshires in Grandcourt and Hessian trenches, with battalion headquarters in Zollern Redoubt. Upon this thawing morning the enemy did not wait for the assault upon South Miraumont Trench and contented himself by inflicting as many casualties as possible whilst the 53rd Brigade was forming up. Five officers and 260 men, however, held on too long and were taken prisoner. The 10th Essex relieved the two front line battalions on February 19th, the bandsmen marching behind with food containers filled with tea, a much appreciated act of consideration. The sector was close to Miraumont Bluff

and the trenches were not continuous. Shelling was heavy, the ground was muddy and there was some difficulty in moving about. Upon relief on the night of February 22nd the Battalion went back to Warwick Huts, where news was received of the enemy's withdrawal from Miraumont and Pys and a portion of Irles. On February 20th "B" and "C" Companies were sent to St. Pierre Divion and the other two to Thiepval, for work on the Grandcourt-Miraumont Road, where they were visited by the Corps and Division commanders and complimented upon their efficiency. The fighting strength at the end of February was 34 other officers and 1,079 other ranks, of whom seven officers and 167 other ranks were on detachment. There had been 76 casualties, but none killed. "Salvage was very much to the fore and with the coming of the thaw there was a great increase of recovered treasure. Colonels, even generals, could be met with every assortment of old iron on their backs trying to look as if their dearest aim in life was to become an old clo' merchant. And woe betide a company commander if General Higginson should happen to find a clip of ammunition lying about unnoticed. One hesitates to calculate the number of these unconsidered trifles that he must have amassed in his pockets in the course of a morning's walk."

SEIZURE OF IRLES.

The immediate objective of these days was the occupation of Irles, which it was hoped the German would be willing to relinquish. But it soon became evident that he would have to be pushed out and the 10th Essex were busy, among others, reconnoitring Irles and the Achiet le Petit-Loupard line from Hill 130, south of Miraumont. The 53rd Brigade relieved the 55th Brigade on March 3rd, "A" Company headquarters in the East Miraumont Road and the others in Miraumont Quarries, with Battalion headquarters in Petit Miraumont. Hostile shelling was severe, particularly upon the roads, and the Battalion lost an average of twelve men per day from this cause during this tour of duty. As a preliminary to the attack upon Irles, the 8th Suffolk occupied the greater portion of Resurrection Trench, which lay upon the western side of the town. The Battalion was then withdrawn and "C" Company, 10th Essex, took over the Trench. Patrolling was most exciting work at this juncture, for it was important that close touch should be kept with the enemy's movements. One patrol, led by Lieut. A. D. Openshaw, consisting of a N.C.O. and four men, was sent out to ascertain whether the southern part of Irles near the church was occupied and also whether the wire in Resurrection Trench was cut. They found the wire fairly well cut and then went across the sunken road to the left of the orchard, where a dug-out was entered and found empty, as also was a trench in the wood to the east of the road. The patrol went cautiously forward to the houses lying to the south-west of the church, where shots were fired from a





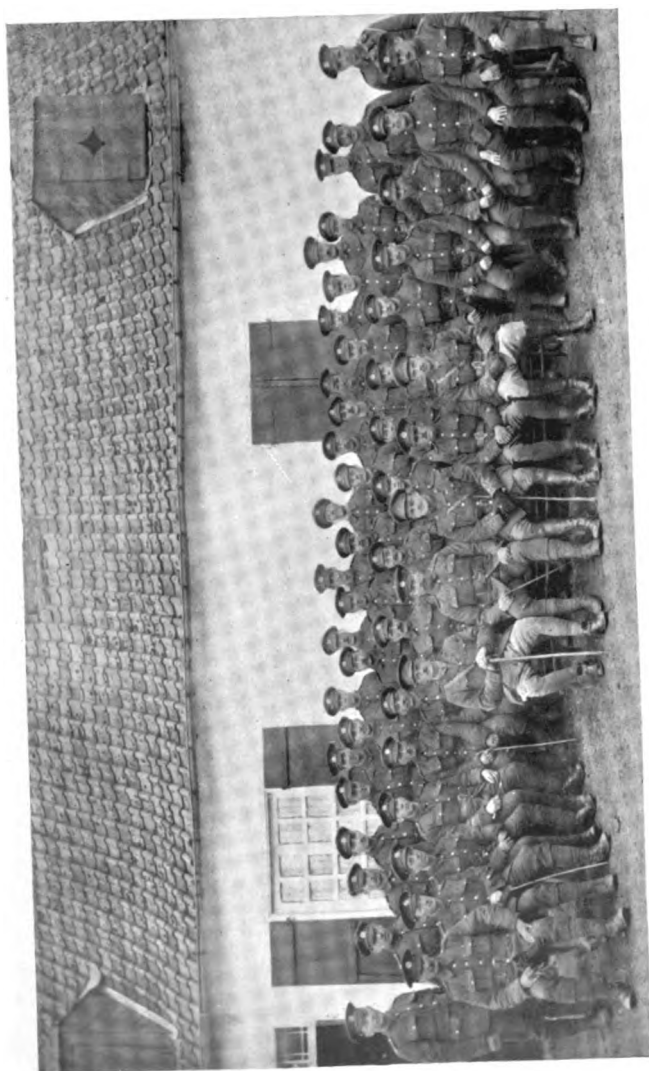
sentry post about fifty yards away. The position thereabouts was apparently only lightly held. The patrol returned at 1 a.m. Another patrol, under 2nd Lieut. J. L. D. Howitt, also went out to ascertain whether the enemy were holding a position running from Resurrection Trench to a point sixty yards west of the Quarry. The trench shallowed rapidly and about fifty yards from the point of entry it was not more than a foot deep. They crawled along it, however, and found the trench deepened again, after which they tried to cross the sunken road, but were fired upon. Another effort met a like reception, so that the patrol returned. On another occasion a patrol worked 300 yards up the trench. A Lewis gun team was making preparation for a bombing attack when it encountered an enemy patrol therein. There was an exchange of fire, upon which the enemy retired.

There was not enough room for forming-up purposes and it was decided to take the block in the trench farther north by about 200 yards. Accordingly "B" Company established two advanced strong points on the night of March 7th, but did not succeed in getting as far as was hoped in Resurrection Trench, for the enemy held on obstinately. Indeed, the Germans retaliated next day and successfully rushed the post, penetrating so far that at least one hundred yards of the trench had to be re-occupied. Bombing was lively throughout the day and fifty yards were recovered, but as further progress would entail heavy casualties, it was decided to attack the enemy in rear. On the night of March 8th-9th 2nd Lieut. V. S. Beevor, M.C., led a patrol from the Quarries and reached the uncut wire. The enemy were alert and saluted the patrol with hand grenades, a lively exchange of missiles ensuing. Captain W. Skeat had placed two sections at the bomb step, under Lieut. Wood, to assist the attack from the north and upon hearing the noise he sent them forward in a northerly direction along the trench line. They traversed the first sixty yards over the top at the rear of the trench in order to avoid the alarm apparatus which the enemy had placed there and then dropped down again, and bombed their way up to the requisite distance, where a strong point was established. A dead German, of the 395th Regiment, was found, with fifteen rifles and sets of equipment.

With Resurrection Trench thus firmly held, reconnaissances were made to acquaint all ranks with the ground which lay between them and Irls, which was to be the objective of the next attack. The place, we are told, "lay on a spur, which jutted out in a south-westerly direction from the Loupart Wood ridge. The centre of the village was some 1,500 yards from the Loupart Line and the main road through the village ran N.E.-S.W. The highest point was the cemetery at the north-eastern end and the greater portion of the houses were under the south side of the spur. The 8th Norfolk and 10th Essex were employed in an encircling movement. The former battalion was to take a trench to the

south-east of Irls, whilst the Essex, a thousand yards to the north, were to move east and secure the north-eastern part of the village. The south-western portion, at a lower altitude, was not assigned to infantry attack, for the higher command drenched it with a barrage and then sent patrols in to "mop up." "A" Company (Captain W. C. Neild) was on the right, "D" Company (Captain T. M. Banks) was on the left, with a platoon of "B" Company holding the strong point on the flank. The remainder of "B" Company (Major A. S. Tween, D.S.O.) continued the line on the left to the Albert-Arras railway and thereat was in touch with the 62nd Division. "C" Company (Captain W. G. P. Hunt, M.C.) was in reserve in Resurrection Trench. Captain Chell records that snow had fallen lightly in the evening and there was a fear that the advancing troops would be detected. White mantles were accordingly served out and the men "presented an extraordinary sight clad apparently in nightgowns, but with the appurtenances of warfare beneath detracting somewhat from the sylph-like lines of waist and corsage." The snow soon melted, however, and the mantles were promptly discarded. In a bad light and heavy mist the attack went forward behind an excellent oblique barrage, between which and the troops there was an interval of 75 yards. Matters went so well that half an hour later battalion headquarters received information that the Quarry, north of Irls, had been reached and at 6.20 a.m. that a strong point had been established at Irls Cemetery. By 6.40 a.m. it was known that all objectives had been gained and were being held. From the outset there was no "fog of war," reports being promptly despatched and quickly received. Machine guns from the orchards on the north-western side of Irls caused several casualties at the opening of the assault, but the Battalion carried on, for the platoon leaders, particularly Lieut. Culver, acted promptly. With the aid of Sergeant Sanders, Corporal Evans and Privates Surridge and Argent and others, the machine guns were rushed in the mist and dealt with either by bombs or rifle fire. Every point was taken in accordance with the programme and almost to scheduled time. The enemy F.O. Post had been cut off by the barrage and captured, with the result that the enemy guns, which were at long range, could not be efficiently directed and there was no hostile artillery fire worthy of the name until three hours later, when it was concentrated upon Irls, then in our safe keeping. The enemy lost sixty killed and 58 taken prisoner, whilst six machine guns and trench mortars were also captured. There were many narrow escapes that day. In the case of Lieut. L. Coulshaw, the revolver hanging in the holster of his belt was hit three times by machine gun bullets, which knocked him over and killed the man by his side, but left him unscathed.

When the objectives had been reached and touch established with the 8th Norfolk on the right, who had been equally successful, "D" Company took over the front line and held a portion of the



N.C.O.'s GROUP, X.M.A.S., 1916.

Standing : —, Hughes, Burrows, Purkis, Chaplin, Drake, Gentry, Slammers, Harris, —, Smy, Smythe, Walker, Gascoine, Col, Cole, Loozell, —, Heutrie, Cole, —, Fisher, Willet, Allison, —, Harrington.

Sitting : Hall, Silver, Smith, Pitt, Mann, Brown, Boye, Juler, Brown, Treasurer, —, Harvey, O'Brien, Sutcliffe, Birch, Starling.

Front Row : Major Lewis, C.S.M. Jagg, Col. Fizzell, R.Q.M.S. Burrell, Capt. Chell.

main Irlès-Grevillers road, with headquarters in the Quarry. "A" Company went into support, with a strong point, manned by two platoons, at the cross-roads. A third platoon was placed in the village, whilst the fourth was at Company headquarters. Efforts were made to obtain touch with the 62nd Division on the left and a patrol, under 2nd Lieuts. Beevor and Carson, went over from Resurrection Trench, crossed the railway line and found a post manned by the Division 150 yards to the north. The patrol returned, but 2nd Lieut. Beevor went forward again in an endeavour to move the post farther up Resurrection Trench, when he was shot through the heart by a sniper, who robbed the Battalion of a first-rate soldier. The ground hereabouts was overlooked by the Germans from Achiet, and further efforts to push along the trench were postponed until dark. Few actions in the war were more carefully organized or more completely successful and all ranks of the Battalion were very gratified.

On the night of March 10th-11th the Battalion was relieved and went back to Boom Ravine, for the 55th Brigade was being put in to take the Loupart Line, which, however, the enemy relinquished upon pressure, and the Brigade followed them right up to St. Leger. Meanwhile, the 53rd Brigade had moved into Wellington Huts, east of Aveluy, where the commander of the Brigade, upon March 15th, congratulated all ranks upon the success at Irlès. Five days later the 10th Essex marched to Warloy, then to Rainneville, whilst by route march and 'bus they arrived at Bacouel station *en route* for Ham-en-Artois, seven miles west of Bethune, which was reached on March 26th. Major A. S. Tween was appointed second-in-command. The strength was 36 officers and 908 other ranks, of whom nine officers and 98 other ranks were serving apart from the unit. The month's casualties included thirty killed and died of wounds and 90 wounded, with three missing.

The 18th Division did not play a prominent part in the Battle of Arras, although it had some trouble in and about Cherisy, "the first set fight in which the Division received a definite and substantial check." The endeavour was to push home the advantage which had been secured by the advance from Arras and on May 3rd the VII Corps (21st, 18th and 14th Divisions) was to advance 2,000 yards to within half a mile of the Vis-en-Artois. The first objective included the taking of Cherisy, which was the task set the 18th Division. The 54th and 55th Brigades were entrusted with the attack. Cherisy was entered, but the advance was stayed at Fontaine Trench, on the right. Direction was not maintained, losses were heavy and before the fight was over the Brigades were back again in their old front line. The result was very disappointing to the Division.

THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

After a rest period, the Division, refreshed and enheartened, was sent to Dickebusch in readiness for the opening of the Third Battle of Ypres, the struggle for Passchendaele Ridge, known to all as the most trying time experienced by the British Army. "Only those who fought through and survived the Flanders summer and autumn campaign of 1917 probed war's awfulness to its deepest depths," wrote the Divisional historian. "Nothing in the war—in any war—can compare in fearfulness, foulness and misery to what was undergone by both British and Germans in that phase of the struggle. The shelling was heaviest; the slippery, water-logged ground could not be dug into deep enough for protection; hard roads disappeared and men were drowned in the shell-holes of the bogged wilderness that night and day was battered and churned afresh by affrighting artillery fire." That blood-drenched campaign exerted a great influence upon the 10th Essex, as upon all other units which underwent the experience. "The close of 1917," wrote Lieut.-Colonel T. M. Banks, "found us a somewhat weary Battalion. Passchendaele activities had not only depleted it in numbers, but had emptied it of buoyancy and native optimism. But let it be remembered that the weariness was born not of the definite action in which we had been engaged. From July to the middle of December, life was lived in indescribable conditions. There was not a glimmering of beauty, except that which came forth from the men—their majestic patience and silent submission to the bloody task. Nature was torn into appalling ugliness. A landscape, once fair and fertile, was now a pressing pain upon the senses. The destruction, the waste, the mud and now the cold thrown in—one almost dreads the memory of them! Quaint humour was dying down. There was a hollowness, like a leaden weight in the heart. Experience is age, and here was experience for a thousand years. And yet, paradoxical as it may sound, we were just children. And it was just the child-like character that carried us through. There was always a to-morrow, better, surely, than to-day."

The 18th Division was attached to the II Corps (Jacob) of the Fifth Army and went into the line on the night of July 7th, when the 55th Brigade relieved the 30th Division, occupying the line which ran from the northern boundary of Sanctuary Wood to Observatory Ridge Road. The 54th Brigade was in support at Dickebusch, whilst the 53rd Brigade, destined to lead the attack, was trained upon a great model, which was set-up in a field between Ouderdom and Poperinghe. Casualties were severe from shellfire, particularly along the road from Dickebusch to Zillebeke.

July 31st was fixed for the attack, by which it was hoped "our troops would succeed in establishing themselves on the crest of the high ground east of Ypres, on which a strong flank could be formed for subsequent operations, and would also secure the crossings of the Steenbeek." The First French Army was on the left of the Fifth Army and on the right was the 41st Division of the Second Army. The greatest measure of success was obtained on the left, where, upon the first day, the Steenbeek was reached, but in the wooded country on the right of the Fifth Army progress was less marked, for the enemy put up an obstinate fight. It was the key of the German position, but, nevertheless, Sanctuary Wood, Shrewsbury Wood, Stirling Castle, Hooze and Bellewaarde Ridge were taken and held. The immediate objective of the 30th Division, to which the 53rd Brigade was attached, was Glencorse Wood, with the 8th Division on the left and the 24th Division on the right. When the 30th Division had passed through Sanctuary Wood and taken the first objective, the 53rd Brigade was to go through it and take Polygon Wood, nearby Veldhoek, as the final objective. The 30th Division swerved to the left and made for Chateau Wood, mistaking it for Glencorse Wood, so that when the 53rd Brigade went forward they struck up against an untaken wood, with the enemy ready to meet them. Nevertheless, the 8th Suffolk and 6th Royal Berkshire went in. "First the sticky, shell-broken slope from Sanctuary Wood to the Menin Road had to be carried; then the road itself taken; then a chain of pillboxes between the road and Glencorse Wood." The Suffolks passed through Sanctuary Wood, then gained the Menin Road and pressed on to the ridge beyond, rushing machine gun posts and defying the daring efforts of German airmen to dislodge them. Five British tanks were used, but were stopped by the mud and then rendered useless by hostile shellfire. The Suffolks seized a German anti-tank gun and, turning it round, fired sixty rounds with it. They could not make further progress beyond Jap Avenue, however. The Berkshires, on the left, took Jargon Switch and the cross-roads north-west of Glencorse Wood. Battalion headquarters were established in Menin Road Tunnel. The second line of defence at the southern edge of Menin Road was armed with four Vickers and four Lewis guns salvaged from the enmarshed tanks. Companies of the 10th Essex and 8th Norfolk went to the aid of their comrades, and there was much uncertainty for several hours. The Germans massed for a counter-attack in Glencorse Wood, but were dispersed by the spirited fire of the Divisional field artillery and the Brigade clung to the thousand yards of ground which it had won. Rain came on and continued for five days, after which the attack was renewed on Inverness Copse and Glencorse Wood on August 10th. Progress was achieved to the edge of the latter wood, in which the Bedfords distinguished themselves, but these centres of enemy resistance were not wrested

from them until the following September by the Australians after weeks of hard bombardment. Another effort was to have been made on the morning of August 11th, but when the Essex and Berkshires were in line the Suffolks had not arrived and the attack had to be postponed. It appeared later that German shellfire, failure to recognize the Menin Road and the obliteration of signal wires to the 53rd Brigade's headquarters all contributed materially to delay their coming until zero hour had passed. That same day "D" Company, of the 10th Essex, were deputed to take a "pillbox" in front of Inverness Copse, but the order was countermanded just before the attack was timed to start. This information was conveyed to Lieut. Compton, but he persisted in the effort with volunteers. The officer was killed, with most of his platoon; he had lost his brother a few days before and was keen to avenge his death. The 53rd Brigade was again ordered to attack on August 18th, this time under the orders of the 56th Division. The 7th Bedford, 1/4th Londons and 12th Middlesex were loaned to the Brigade, but again little progress was made, although there was stiff bayonet fighting. There was another effort by the Brigade against the north-western corner of Inverness Copse, but exhaustion and casualties told their tale and the Division was taken out of the line. It was not again detailed for a general attack until October 22nd, when the 53rd Brigade's victory at Poelcappelle "came after bitter and repeated disappointments like a beam of light in a dark place." This exploit was the necessary prelude to the last operation in this sphere, the capture of Passchendaele, and it was more than successful, for Tracas Farm was reached, well beyond the limits of the second objective. Previous attempts had been made, which resulted in a precarious hold being obtained of the outskirts of Poelcappelle. The Division had to confirm possession and take the line well past the village along the road to the north. For this purpose the 18th Division came under General Maxse, then commanding the XVIII Corps, and he quickly enthused them with his own indomitable spirit. "I have arranged a very nice battle for you, gentlemen, with lots of Huns to kill." The 55th Brigade went in first on October 11th, but the downpour and the mud, coupled with unsubdued machine gun fire, held up the attack before the objective was reached. The 53rd Brigade was designated for the next effort and meanwhile the artillery pounded away in filth and slime. The movement was timed for 5.28 a.m. on October 22nd and was brilliantly successful. The Brigadier, General Higginson, feinted with a bluff attack on the south of the village, wherein dummy figures on poles caused a most wasteful expenditure of enemy ammunition, whilst from the north came the weight of the onslaught. "This ruse was published to the Army as a model effort and so pleased were G.H.Q. that the names of the successful battalions were made known to the British public through the war

correspondents. Great glory, this, for English units were too often lost in vague anonymity." The combat is thus described in Lord Haig's despatches: "Two successful operations, in which we captured over 200 prisoners and gained positions of considerable importance east of Poelcappelle and within the southern edge of Houlthulst Forest, were undertaken by us, in the one case by East Country and Northumberland troops (18th and 84th Divisions), and in the other by West Country and Scots battalions (85th Division, Major-General G. Meek Franks) in co-operation with the French." The 10th Essex and 8th Norfolk were the assaulting troops. Brigade headquarters were in a "pillbox" on the edge of Poelcappelle and in that tiny place, crowded with officers, the shells fell thudding round. The men had aluminium discs to assist in identifying their whereabouts, but as the platoons moved to the jumping-off place a farm caught on fire behind the Essex and displayed them plainly to the enemy. Nevertheless, the troops went forward with vigour. The Norfolks quickly seized the Brewery—machine gun fire from which had been a costly experience in earlier attacks—and then at 7.30 the Essex went through, taking Noble's Farm on the left, Meunier House and then Tracas Farm, on the right. The Germans counter-attacked about Noble's Farm, but were easily repulsed. The following night the Division marched triumphantly out of the line.

But they had not done with the battlefield. For another month they assisted to hold Houlthulst Forest—"crouching in icy mud, drenched with pitiless rain, shelled day and night. The acme of filthy hideousness, a Calvary of misery, and none could foresee the end. There was nothing sylvan about Houlthulst, whatever imagination may have conjured up from the name. It was a flat, low-lying 600 acres of broken stumps and wreckage, a swamp with many a deep and treacherous hole to trap the unwary walker and let him in up to the neck. There are stories that the Germans, in as much dragged misery as ourselves, came at times to pull out with ropes men of ours who had got engulfed in the slime. It was mud that stank. When the rain ceased the nostrils had to accept a faded musty smell that hung in the air five miles behind the line—a smell that told of desolation and decay, of gas shells, of dead men. Trenches were impossible. The men in the line garrisoned a few shell-holes protected here and there with breastworks that were constantly becoming submerged; company and battalion headquarters were in old pillboxes, where the concrete was cracked and no longer watertight; the line was reached by duckboard tracks from brigade headquarters 6,000 or 7,000 yards in rear." The climatic conditions and persistent shellfire combined to reduce the Battalion to skeleton strength. It was not until Christmas was in sight that the Division was relieved and taken to recruit in more pleasant places.

Let us turn once again to the details of these operations with

which the 10th Essex were particularly concerned. During the early stages of the Arras battle, which opened on a snowy Easter Monday, 1917, the Battalion remained quietly at Hamen-Artois and then moved to Houchin, via Bethune, which was reached on April 21st. The 53rd Brigade was for the time being part of the I Corps, ready to move at six hours' notice for the purpose of holding the reserve line between Bully Grenay and Loos, the first and only time that the Battalion had a glimpse of the Loos battlefield. Tangry was reached on April 27th and Beaurains on the 29th, as reserve to the 54th Brigade, where the Essex bivouacked and worked on the Beaurains-Neuville Vitasse road. On May 2nd the 53rd Brigade was in divisional reserve to the 54th and 55th Brigades in the area between Heninel and Neuville Vitasse. The Division was launched against Cherisy the next day. The village was entered, but not held. The 53rd Brigade was not, however, actively concerned. Orders were received to take up a defensive line in front of Heninel, manned by two companies, with an outpost line 200 yards in advance, the two remaining companies being held in readiness to repulse an enemy break through. The Battalion was warned that it would be used to counter-attack should it be found necessary. It was in the famous Hindenburg Line, which was inspected with interest—"trenches through which one could drive a horse and cart and belts of wire hundreds of yards thick we had not thought of in our wildest fancies." All ranks had a good view of the attack, for it was a fine day. The Battalion did not move, however, until the evening of May 4th, when it went into the support trenches, the chief occupation being the burial of the dead who had fallen in the taking of Wancourt ridge. On May 6th the Essex relieved the 6th Royal Berkshire in the front line, but were only there a couple of days, when, owing to a re-arrangement, they occupied support positions between Heninel and Fontaine, finding comfortable quarters in the famous Hindenburg Tunnel. "There was a non-stop run along this tunnel of over a mile. When it did stop, it stopped, so far as we were concerned, because the Boche held the further portion of it, and rival sentry posts fronted each other dramatically in the darkness underground. It was curious to share dug-outs thus with the enemy and later our insular dislike for such close neighbourhood got the upper hand and the tunnel was blown in between the rival tenants. Compartments ran off on either side at regular intervals and provided a good deal of accommodation. Exits were numerous and ventilation was quite good." When in the front line on May 15th, intimation was received that there was a possibility of an enemy withdrawal and patrols were frequently sent out to obtain early information. The next day the Division on the right reported definitely that the enemy were falling back, but when patrols, under 2nd Lieut. R. H. Binney, Corporal Meager and Corporal

Goy, investigated, they found the enemy holding advanced posts in Pug Lane in some strength, two of whom they killed. There was stiff fighting on either side of the Brigade on May 19th and 20th, which was not, however, involved, and a transfer to reserve came on May 21st. The casualties for the month totalled 55 (eight killed) and the strength was 41 officers and 841 other ranks (13 officers and 120 other ranks detached). The Battalion bivouacked south of Boyelles and then went on June 2nd to the valley of the Cojeul, where cricket and football formed a welcome change. The Battalion was in the line again on June 11th-12th. Patrolling was incessant in order that touch with the enemy might be maintained, and on occasion enemy parties were encountered. A new system of enfilade fire by machine gun and artillery was put into operation. On the day that the Battalion was relieved the Brigade Major, Captain P. R. Meautys, M.C., was killed by shellfire, whilst General Higginson had a narrow escape from a shellburst, which hurled him to the bottom of a dug-out shaft and killed his runner, who fell on top of him. "He walked on afterwards unperturbed," quaintly records Captain Chell, "but at battalion headquarters we knew that some thing unusual had happened, for he accepted the offer of a drink—a thing he invariably refused from battalions in the line even on the thirstiest of days. This was the one exception, and it took the form of a cup of tea!" At Souastre, in addition to customary training, the inhabitants were assisted in the removal of sandbags and other impedimenta of war, which were not deemed necessary now that the front had been advanced several miles. There was an increase in strength during the month, for the Battalion totalled 42 officers and 958 other ranks on June 30th, of whom seven officers and 74 other ranks were detached. The only casualties were one officer and 13 other ranks. During May Captain R. A. Chell vacated the adjutancy on appointment to the staff of the Brigade and was succeeded by Lieut. R. Forbes.

HARD FIGHTING IN GLENCORSE WOOD.

On July 4th the Battalion was transferred to Cassel *en route* for the Steenvoorde area. During the march to Steenvoorde, H.M. King George V passed the Essex men. Training was soon in progress for the anticipated advance. There were some innovations for the Battalion, in particular the Yukon pack, which had been found suitable by the Canadians upon the Somme, but which was not so successful in the marshes of Ypres. "Sports, concerts, champagne dinners in Steenvoorde and in billets, rides to Mont des Cats, convivial evenings at Cassel and 'Pop.' made these into days of halcyon happiness. But there was always a spectre of serious business stalking in the background. Corps Commander Jacob turned up one day and told us what a fine lot of fellows we were—a sure sign of impending offensiveness.

And a workmen's 'bus at unearthly hours of the morning used to take up contingents of sleepy soldiers to the neighbourhood of Dickebusch, whence a wearisome trudge across the flat to Zillebeke Lake and Yeomanry Post reminded us that such a thing as war still existed." On July 13th it was announced the 6th Royal Berkshire and the 8th Suffolk would be the attacking battalions, each with a company of the 10th Essex as moppers-up, whilst the remaining two companies acted as ammunition carriers. Three days later it was known that the 53rd Brigade was to pass through the 30th Division when it had reached the Black Line and capture the Green and Red Lines. So much for the hopes of High Command. On the night of July 28th-29th the Battalion moved into the Reninghelst area and on July 29th headquarters and "A" and "D" Companies, with transport, were sent to New Dickebusch Camp, whilst "B" and "C" Companies, who were to accompany the attacking units, went to Canal Reserve Camp. There was another step forward in the darkness of the following night, lit only by the flicker of the guns, when the headquarters and half of the Battalion occupied railway dug-outs in the assembly area and the other two companies camped on the northern bank of Zillebeke Lake. At dawn on July 31st the 53rd Brigade was in full readiness to follow the 30th Division in expectation that when the latter had made Glencorse Wood, they would pass through and complete the day's programme in Polygon Wood. "C" Company (Hunt) followed the Suffolks and "B" Company (Innocent) was attached to the Berkshires. At 3.50 a.m. the barrage opened, which was answered lightly by the enemy, who also fired a few gas shells into Zillebeke. Then at the break of day the 30th Division were off, the supporting units promptly moving up. At 6 a.m. news came that the 30th Division were in Glencorse Wood and an hour afterwards the Essex men followed the Berkshires and Suffolks, who were in artillery formation, through Sanctuary Wood to the Ypres-Menin Road, but there the trouble commenced. The 30th Division had swerved to the left and as the leading units of the 53rd Brigade crossed the road and climbed the hill on the other side they were met by an overwhelming fire from the unsubdued concrete pillboxes, which caused them to deploy. It was quickly realized that Glencorse Wood was still in hostile possession, but with splendid spirit Berkshires and Suffolks, with the aid of the Essex Companies—notwithstanding that the barrage, keeping to schedule, had moved on—attacked the enemy and fierce fighting took place. Some progress was made to the edge of Glencorse Wood, but it came to a halt at Surbiton Villas and Jargon Trenches. "B" Company had the distinction of capturing a gun. On the left flank 2nd Lieut. I. H. Linford, with ten men, maintained touch between the 2nd Royal Berkshire and the 8th Royal Berkshire. There was a constant interchange of machine gun and rifle fire during the day, but at night the Brigade was relieved

by the 80th Division and went back to the Railway Dug-outs in heavy rain. "As darkness fell again," wrote Lieut.-Colonel Banks, "and the rain slashed down upon the rounded roofs of the Nissen huts, we pitied the poor fellows still up there and turned over in the blankets to bury the uncomfortable memories of the opening scene of the Third Battle of Ypres, in sleep such as only the weary soldier-man can know." The Battalion lost Captain William George Philip Hunt, M.C. (commanding "C" Company), who was mortally wounded by a shell, and 2nd Lieut. Wilfred John Thompson, of "B" Company, who had only recently joined from the 7th Essex. The total casualties were 122, of whom 33 were killed in action.

On August 1st the Battalion was concentrated at Micmac Camp and, then, two days later, at Dickebusch Huts, where a rest was spent very thankfully. The most lasting memory of that time to one officer was a communion service in the Battalion canteen, with a little group of officers and men "among the odd and varied stores of fruit tins, cigarette packets, eggs and writing paper. And incongruous as the surroundings were, the service lost nothing in sincerity on account of them." The 10th Essex took over the line held by the 7th Queen's on the night of 10-11th August, with headquarters at Stirling Castle. The night was dark and stormy, with much shelling and the relief was an arduous task. The 55th Brigade had suffered heavy losses in a recent attack and found it difficult to man the line. A gap of many yards was accidentally discovered by the Menin road and it was a very grateful company commander who later heard that the platoon commander he sent to fill the breach had found a "pillbox," of which he had promptly taken possession and which served thenceforth as the company headquarters. A message was received ordering an attack by the Brigade in the early morning of August 12th, but it was cancelled, though not before much preparation had been made. "'B' Company, which was in support at Crab Crawl, was summoned to aid the Berkshires, and Captain Skeat, emulating the exploits of a famous Duke, marched his company across the wilderness to the top of the hill and then, being told the show was off, marched them down again. The operation sounds a simple one. In reality it was something of a masterpiece of leadership and direction-finding in the dark, even at the best of times. In point of fact, a complete battalion managed to lose its way entirely that night, and its failure to turn up on the tape line kept everyone on tenterhooks until the attack was abandoned at the very last moment."

A GALLANT OFFICER.

Then later that day ensued one of those tragic incidents which are not forgotten whilst men live who played a part therein. It is best told in the words of Lieut.-Colonel Banks, who, as company commander, had the story first hand: "There was an obstinate

German pillbox at the corner of Inverness Copse, opposite Clapham Junction, which was a very thorn in the side of any further advance to the east, and the fiat went forth that 'D' was to take this stronghold while the fireworks were in progress on the left. It was a one officer job and Rex Compton volunteered. I was reluctant to accept his offer, for the poor boy had just suffered a desperate sorrow a few days before, when, learning that his brother's Division (2nd Lieut. Guy Compton, D.C.M., M.M., 11th Royal Sussex Regiment, killed in action near Ypres, July 26th) was in the neighbourhood, he went over to pay him a visit and found that he had met a gallant death two days before. Such are the indelible bitternesses of war. But Compton was insistent on the job and as all the remaining officers were wounded or ailing, there was nothing for it but to take his offer. No. 15 platoon was lined out on either side of Jasper Trench, which ran towards the objective, and all was ready save that nothing could be heard of the Suffolks. Zero was 4.20 a.m. and the watch-hand crept on past 4 o'clock with still no news, and our anxiety was intense, when at 4.10 a panting runner arrived with the message that the infantry attack would not take place, though there was no time to stop the barrage. A couple of runners went out at once to warn Compton and he was able to get his men into shelter and then our guns opened out. Either with set purpose or on the spur of a gallant impulse, Compton shouted to those around him to have a go for the pillbox and the small handful dashed forward on their lone hand undertaking. The odds were dead against him. They had a hundred and fifty yards of flat to cover and our shells had misjudged and were landing beyond the German posts. So, with no other attacks to take their attention and immune from shells, the enemy machine gunners could concentrate on the little band and they played sad havoc in their ranks. Compton and his platoon sergeant—Sergeant Chilcott—fell together when they had covered half the distance and the others were rapidly hit. But, amazing to say, one man actually reached the pillbox, and, finding himself alone and unable to get at the garrison inside, he tumbled into a shell-hole and remained there all day until darkness fell, when he made his way back to the Company. One cannot help feeling that Rex Compton was out to avenge his brother. Had he succeeded he might have gained a V.C. As it was, the failure left us mourning a very brave and likable comrade and the followers who went with him, faithful unto death."

For the rest of the Battalion little was doing except the exceeding unpleasantness of shellfire. Captain Belanger, R.A.M.C., was conspicuous in his perilous task of removing wounded, whilst Lieut. Openshaw, of "A" Company, was busy upon patrol during that same night. On August 16th the Battalion passed through Zillebeke to Cafe Belge. Thence, the next day, in crowded trains, the Brigade went to Rubrouck,



COMPTON'S GALLANT FORLORN HOPE.

lying between Cassel and St. Omer, where the accommodation was very limited. At this camp a draft of one officer and 219 other ranks brought up the strength of the 10th Essex again, for the return at the end of the month was 89 officers and 1,080 other ranks. The casualties totalled 180, of whom 17 were killed and 14 missing, presumed killed.

Specialist training was the chief occupation during the early days of September, in addition to which there was practice in night attack and night patrols. Part of the Battalion had a trip to the seaside on September 15th, and there was an inspection of the Brigade two days later by General Maxse, then commanding XVIII Corps, who was thus renewing acquaintance with his old Division—a renewal of friendship would, perhaps, be a truer indication of the mutual feeling between the General and his former officers. Temporary changes in the internal organization of the Battalion occurred about this time, Major T. M. Banks going to second-in-command; Captain Innocent ("C" Company) became major, whilst Captain Openshaw took over "D" Company. On September 23rd the Brigade was transferred to Road Camp, a series of hutments at St. Jans-ter-Biezen, nearby Poperinghe. The strength at the end of September was 42 officers and 1,077 other ranks, of whom 32 officers and 1,006 other ranks were with the Battalion, which presented a fine soldierly appearance on parade.

THE POELCAPPELLE EXPLOIT.

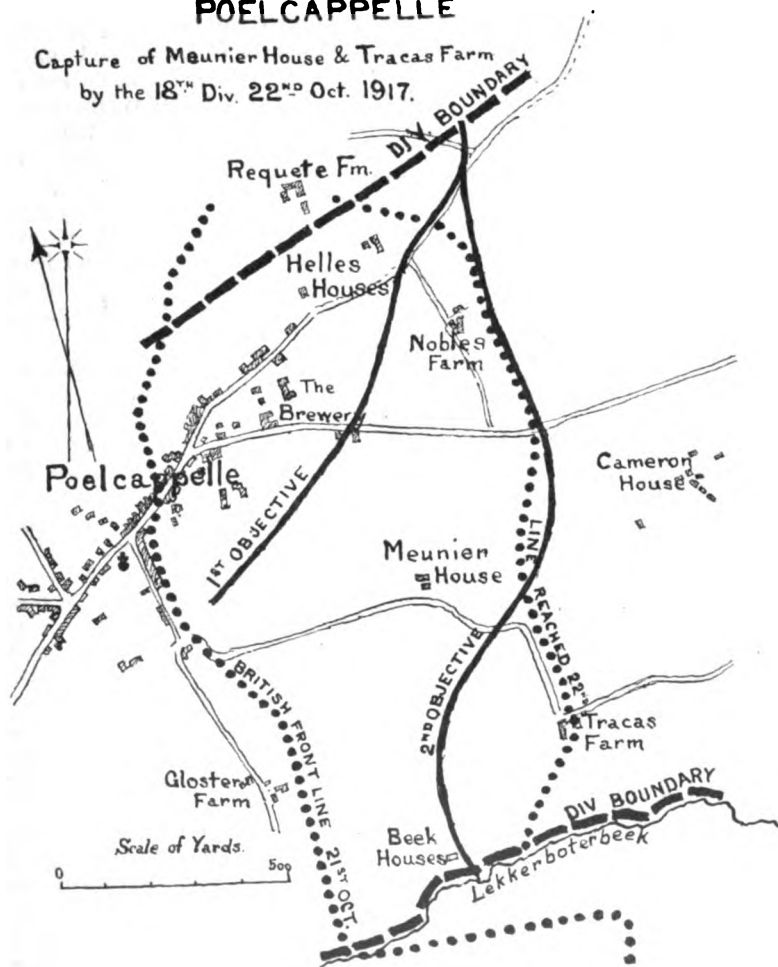
The 10th Essex, although they knew it not, were preparing for an enterprise which was to prove completely successful, bringing them much praise and, for the time being, a prominent place in the story of the war. It was none other than the capture of Poelcappelle, which had once been a pleasant agricultural centre, but which had now been battered into ruins and was dismal with the shellholes, mud and debris of war. There was much preliminary conference and planning. On October 10th battalions of the 55th Brigade attempted to finally wrest the village from the enemy, but without success, and they were relieved by the Essex and Norfolks, who held the Canal bank for some days. There the Battalion sustained the temporary loss of the adjutant, Captain Forbes, who was wounded whilst standing outside a pillbox which served as battalion headquarters, a bomb being dropped from an aeroplane on a peaceful Autumn morning. "A humorous incident was provided within the same pillbox on another occasion during this tour, when a sudden spasm of gas shelling caught the majority of officers asleep, and frantic efforts to wake up and adjust gas masks simultaneously resulted in the Colonel nearly choking himself with mal-adjustment, the fiery-minded Dr. Belanger becoming apoplectic with rage at the usurpation of some of his functions by the Assistant Adjutant, and Padre Randell getting his right foot firmly and

inextricably wedged into his left boot." High Command were intent upon taking Poelcappelle and enemy movements were narrowly observed. Lance-Corporal Adams was sent out with five men to investigate a strong point, the emplacement of which could be easily distinguished. The western edge appeared to be an old shed or stable, with a concrete blockhouse behind, the face of which was camouflaged with turf or similar material. It was thought a machine gun loophole could be discerned in the centre, also a small mound at the entrance. The patrol was despatched to clear up these points, but when about fifty yards away a line of men, estimated at between 25 and 30, came out and moved forward as if taking up posts in front. They caught sight of Adams and his men, opened fire with a machine gun and then advanced with the intent of encircling them, but the patrol were wary and withdrew safely. That night Sergeant Dupree and six men set out from the headquarters of "D" Company at Gloster House, with the object of determining the position of the sniper and machine gun firing from a near point almost due east. They had only proceeded some forty yards, when a ration party, forty strong, was seen coming from the direction of Meunier House. The patrol fired on them and dispersed them, one being captured. Moving on again, the patrol located the machine gun and found it in charge of a strong crew. Rifle grenades were fired into the post, but the enemy vigorously replied. As they were withdrawing, Sergeant Dupree and his men met a German who had apparently lost his way. He fought gamely and was killed. The patrol then returned. Enemy aircraft were active, twelve of them on one occasion dropping bombs over this section of the British lines.

The Battalion moved back to Tunnelling Camp on October 17th, knowing that another attack upon Poelcappelle was in early contemplation and that the Essex and Norfolks were to be employed. The troops were taken to Cane Trench, in the former German support line, where a good deal of suffering was caused by gas shelling. The tape lines were placed under the direction of 2nd Lieutenants J. G. Culver, M.C., and L. W. Mason, with a N.C.O. from each company. On the night of October 20th and next evening the Battalion moved up thereto in readiness for the attack. Amid heavy gunfire of high explosive, gas shells and shrapnel, searching every corner of the front and support lines, "the slow, painful march of the Battalion, strung out in single file over nearly a mile in length, was an agonizing experience." Touch was made with the 34th Brigade on the left, and the Norfolks were reported in position in front of the Battalion at 2.30 a.m. The wait for the signal for the attack was made in muddy shell holes. Battalion headquarters were shared with the Norfolks in a pillbox in the Langemarck road, just outside Poelcappelle, and the feelings of those stationed there were not improved by the spectacle of the devastation caused

POELCAPPELLE

Capture of Meunier House & Tracas Farm
by the 18th Div. 22nd Oct. 1917.



by a shellburst amid a group of men. The interior of the pillbox was tightly congested with officers and men on headquarters duty. Every now and then a shell would explode on top and shake everybody, whilst heavy shells bursting nearby frequently put out the flickering candles. To this point came all the news of the progress of the attack, which is thus briefly referred to in the Battalion War Diary: "October 22nd.—Battalion attacked and captured enemy positions east of Poelcappelle. Afterwards relieved by 11th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, thence proceeded to Cane Post area."

A longer account is, however, preserved as a special appendix. The Norfolks were to move first and take the Brewery, from which position the Essex men were to leap forward and secure Meunier House to the north of the village. The company objectives were: "B" Company (Captain W. Skeat), on the left, was to capture Noble's Farm and the strong point to the south-east of it; "A" Company (Captain W. C. Neild, M.C.), in the centre, the strong points lying in front of it, whilst "C" Company (Lieut. R. H. Binney), on the right, was to operate against certain strong points and Meunier House. "D" Company had a special role on the extreme right, under the command of Captain A. D. Openshaw, in attacking in an easterly direction and having for its main objectives Beek Houses. The steady rain which had fallen from 1 a.m. had waterlogged the ground and progress was very difficult, but the protection of the barrage was not lost. Visibility was also poor and officers and N.C.O.'s had to advance by compass bearings, but so carefully had they been worked out that the final objectives were accurately located. At 5.35 the Norfolks sprang forward and took the Brewery and then at 6.35 the Essex men moved up to the final forming-up position. There was some delay on the left flank owing to a strong point holding out. 2nd Lieut. F. W. Freeman, with his platoon, took prompt steps to seize it and in so doing was wounded with his platoon sergeant and three section commanders. Nevertheless, C.S.M. Hammond took over command of the platoon and by working round the flank forced the surrender of the garrison. This was quickened by the pluck of Private S. A. Cowlett, who threw several bombs inside and wounded an officer and some of the men. Forming up then proceeded without further delay, though more casualties were caused by machine gun fire from the direction of Helles Houses and the artillery fire which had stormily played upon the battalions shortly after the Norfolks had commenced their attack. "B" Company's enterprise against Noble's Farm went well. The company commander's stentorian voice could be heard so far above the din that his men asserted the barrage was eclipsed; at any rate, Captain Skeat handled them so ably that in a few minutes they had reached their objective and had reorganized and consolidated the position. A few of the enemy in shellholes gave some trouble

whilst this was taking place, but those holding them were dispersed by rifle and grenade fire. This part of the line was subsequently taken over by a party of the 8th Norfolk. "A" Company suffered few casualties whilst forming up and when in position they dug in so well that at zero hour only six men had been wounded. The Norfolks were only about 150 yards in front, but visibility was so bad that they could not be seen. The hostile shelling was increasing in weight and so Captain Neild, immediately the Norfolks had started out, moved his company forward 250 yards, but even then the effects of the shelling were still felt. The fall of the strong point, on the left, previously referred to, enabled "A" Company to move into Poelcappelle, where the state of the battle was learned from the Norfolks. Preparations for the second phase were then made and two hours after zero "A" Company was on the move. The mud was a great handicap and there were losses owing to the men being held up and thus not being able to pass the enemy barrage quickly enough. All ranks displayed great steadiness, however, and the Company was in possession of the strong points by about 8 a.m., when posts were immediately established, the work of consolidation proceeding rapidly. Colonel Frizell sent an order at 2 p.m. to the effect that patrols should ascertain if Cameron House was occupied and, if not, that it was to be held. The enemy were found in possession and without a disposition to withdraw, so that the patrol returned. "C" Company suffered a good deal from shellfire after it had assembled on the tape line, and it was there that Lieut. E. H. Brown was killed and A/C.S.M. Thompson, a platoon sergeant and all the company runners and signallers were wounded. The casualties increased so heavily when the final forming-up positions were being taken over that Lieut. Binney had considerable difficulty in arranging his order of attack, but this was accomplished with the aid of 2nd Lieut. J. G. Wood, who was severely wounded whilst so engaged. Everything was ready, nevertheless, at the appointed hour, but the numbers had become so diminished that the company commander concentrated his attention upon the capture of Meunier House. This was quickly effected, the enemy, who had been sending out Verey lights, evacuating the position as the troops approached. Patrols were at once sent forward and posts established east and west. "A" Company also sent up a small reinforcement to Meunier House, so that the Battalion's hold upon it was strengthened. "D" Company, on the extreme right, had been observing the success of the main attack and then, at the given signal, displayed dummy figures on poles, as if a strong offensive were developing at that point. By this means they attracted the enemy's fire and when news came that "C" Company were in Meunier House the Company commenced their enveloping movement, Captain Openshaw surveying operations from the roof of Gloster House

"like an enthusiastic racegoer on the grandstand at Epsom." The advance was most successful, very little opposition being encountered. Strong points were immediately constructed east of Beek Houses and a patrol, under Corporal C. J. Bowley, went on to Tracas Farm, which was at that time under the fierce fire of our own artillery. He found it unoccupied, but could not remain there owing to our own cannonade. Upon their report Major Banks, who was making a personal reconnaissance of the line, ordered a platoon to occupy the position as soon as the gunfire permitted. Lieut. R. R. Nicol, who had taken over command of the Company, upon Captain Openshaw being wounded, was informed of the situation, so that when the artillery lifted from Tracas Farm, it was occupied by "D" Company without difficulty. At 9.30 a.m. connection had been gained between the Corps cyclists on the southern side of the Lekkerboterbeek and the Company, and touch was also established with "C" Company on the left.

At 3 p.m. C.S.M. A. Bishork and Lance-Sergeant B. T. Dupree had an exciting and perilous adventure. They set out to investigate a pillbox lying to the Company's front, but with rifles which had been rendered useless by the mud, their only effective weapon being a Very light pistol. The pair became separated and Dupree, with the pistol, went on ahead with the pillbox as his objective. Suddenly he came upon two Germans with a light machine gun. He immediately pointed his weapon at their heads and they were about to surrender when the garrison of the pillbox hurried to the rescue. "A rough and tumble ensued, in which the sergeant managed to give a good account of himself. He discharged his pistol into the middle of his assailants, kicked the machine gun into a shell hole and then set about defending himself with his fists. But he was outnumbered and although the Germans could not shoot at him for fear of hitting one of their own men, a rifle butt on his head put an end to his resistance and he was dragged into the pillbox, but not before he had left his mark on more than one of his opponents. The German officer inside could speak English and he told Dupree that if a further attack were made he was going to surrender, whereupon Dupree did his best to persuade him to come over with him right away and save further trouble. The German seemed inclined to fall in with the idea, but, after some cogitation, finally decided to wait till dusk, when his orders bade him withdraw. . . . Aid did not come and when darkness fell, and his comrades were stumbling down duckboards to shelter and rest, Dupree was marched eastward into captivity in Germany." Much had happened outside, however, for C.S.M. Bishork had heard the report of the Very pistol and signals were made which attracted the attention of Private C. Andrews. He guided the platoon, then only about eight strong, to the strong point, which they found well held by the enemy and although they

had a hard fight for an hour, in which they caused several casualties, they could not overcome the machine gun fire. They were in front of it when relieved by a platoon of the 11th Royal Fusiliers, who had been ordered up whilst the fight was in progress. About half past four heavy shellfire pointed to a counter-attack by way of the Westroosebeke road, but 2nd Lieut. N. D. J. Hight was able to deal effectively with the party, who got within two hundred yards of the Essex position, by deploying from shellhole to shellhole. As the Germans came forward they were met with rifle and Lewis gun fire. One of the latter weapons stopped firing owing to the mud, and L.-Corporal C. Tebbitt coolly proceeded to take the gun to pieces, clean and reassemble it and then fire again in time to assist the repulse of the final enemy effort. It was due to the coolness and determination of Hight and his men that the Germans were driven off, leaving several casualties, which were removed during the night. This post was not relieved until next day (October 28rd) and all that time was the object of special hostile attention. When the 11th Royal Fusiliers came in at night, "A," "C" and part of "B" Company returned to Cane Post and "D" Company remained in support in Rose Trench. Whilst looking for this point, Lieut. Nicol was seriously wounded and handed over command to C.S.M. Bishork, as all the other officers in the Company had become casualties. Then, having seen that his men were safely in the trench, Nicol walked down to the dressing station. This Company afterwards also reported at Cane Post. On October 28rd the Battalion embussed at Canal Bank, where it was joined by Hight's gallant band and the unit, once more together, proceeded to Tunnelling Camp.

Testimony is borne to the assistance rendered during this bout of fighting by runners, stretcher-bearers and the Medical Officer, Captain Belanger. The casualties were severe, totalling 258. One officer (Lieut. Eric Howard Brown) and 36 other ranks were killed or died of wounds, whilst 28 were missing, believed killed. The wounded numbered six officers and 187 other ranks. The strength of the Battalion at the close of the month was 38 officers and 764 other ranks, of whom 11 officers and 79 other ranks were detached.

On October 30th the Battalion was sent to Poll Hill Camp, hoping that rumours current of a move to the more pleasant land of Italy would prove correct. It was not to be, however. The Battalion had still another month to spend in the slime of Ypres. Lieut.-Colonel Banks recalls that these disappointed hopes led to a great deal of grousing, which ceased, however, as soon as the 10th Essex were face to face with the difficulties and dangers of the front line. About this time, too, the enemy developed a habit of using high velocity guns, which shelled places five and six miles to the rear and which led to the adoption of fresh ideas respecting the siting of camps. For the time being, however, the gunfire had to be endured with what equanimity could be mustered, though it was disconcerting to be suddenly awakened

in a Nissen hut "by a stream of rushing missiles coming out of the harmless blue from goodness knows where, with a rush like an express train passing through a wayside station." The orderly room was riddled with shell fragments and at periods it was unsafe to move from a prone position. The danger became so pronounced that the Battalion moved to Coldstream Camp. Then, on the 6th, the Battalion and two companies were despatched to Baboon Camp. This disposition meant that whilst the main body of the Battalion were upon the Canal Bank, "A" Company (Innocent) were at Wijdendrift and "B" Company (Byerley) near the Broembeek, whilst on the left, in Houlthulst Forest, lay the Berkshires and Suffolks. For six miles between these advanced posts and battalion headquarters lay six miles of duck boards and as unhealthy and desolate a terrain as humanity could wish to endure. Then, on November 7th, the Battalion relieved the Berkshires and were in the Forest area after a march up which, for sheer unpleasantness, was long remembered. Happily, the enemy shellfire did not find the Essex men and they took up position near to Louvois Farm. At this spot "Brigade headquarters seems upon another continent, Division as distant as the Falkland Isles and Blighty situated in some other planetary system. But jobs soon spring to hand and we forget all about the isolation in the pressing cares of the moment. . . . The men had no shelter, nowhere dry to sit or lie, no breastworks, no wire in front of them, no warmth, nor possibility of motion, except at night. How they stuck it is a perpetual marvel." The company headquarters were at old enemy pillboxes, which had been re-named Panama House, Colombo House and the Cinq Chemins, with battalion headquarters at Ajax House. Little was done by day, but at night the activity was incessant. Patrols, under 2nd Lieutenants C. J. Guildford and H. R. Dodd, reconnoitred No Man's Land, whilst in the rear munitions and food were brought up, first by hand and then by mules. On the night of November 8th-9th the Germans, who had been lying in wait in close proximity, suddenly rushed two posts and seized four men; had they been ten minutes earlier it is possible they would have also captured the battalion commander (Major Banks) and his runner, for at that time he was inspecting the post. The Battalion made a peaceful advance of about 200 yards on a frontage of 500 yards the following day and at night was relieved by the 11th Royal Fusiliers, proceeding by light railway to de Wippe Camp. On November 16th the 10th Essex moved to Canal Bank and three days later went into the line again. Time was spent in improving the posts, patrolling and working in conjunction with the R.E. On the night of November 22nd the Battalion went back again to de Wippe camp, then to the Canal Bank on November 28th, where, at the end of the month, the strength was 86 officers and 713 other ranks, of whom 14 officers and 186 other ranks were on detached duty. The

casualties totalled 56, including five killed and five missing.

The Battalion again took over the trenches on the night of December 1st-2nd, having two companies in the front line, one in support at Faidherbe cross road and the other in reserve at Tee Bend. The main defensive line was wired under the supervision of 79th Field Company, R.E. On the 4th the Battalion went out of the line again, entraining for de Wippe Camp at Boesinghe station. "The frost-covered duckboards saw many hurried feet on the night of relief as we turned our backs on Houlthulst Forest for the last time." The 53rd Brigade went into support and the 10th Essex moved to Emile Camp, with the duty of holding the Canal Bank should a hostile attack develop. Two companies were meanwhile employed upon burying cable near Wijdendrift and the other two upon drainage of the Broembeek and Guytersale areas. The Division was relieved in mid-December by the 57th Division and the Battalion went by train from Elverdinghe to Proven and then by route march to Hopfland, a district of scattered farmhouses.

It was there that Christmas was spent with much festivity. The day opened with service in "B" Company barn, in which a party of specially trained carol singers were heard with pleasure, after which came the dinner. The officers messed together at night, the special feature being some old brandy with which to wind up the feast. "Corporal Tozer, in stentorian tones, passed on the order to his henchmen. Pause and subdued conversation. But no brandy was forthcoming. So Neild expostulated with the mess corporal over the delay. The Colonel was visibly agitated. Corporal Tozer dashed about in fury and loudly swore at the cellarer. Impatience had reached its height. 'Corporal Tozer, where is the brandy?' With a tear in his throat, the harassed Tozer made reply. 'Please, sir, the waiter says he put it in that there corner afore the dinner.' Everyone looked to the corner, but no brandy was discoverable anywhere." Subsequent investigation revealed that the temptation had proved too great for a certain officer's servant, who suffered dismissal to the ranks again after one night of glorious life. The Battalion moved to Penton Camp, near Proven, on December 28th, and the next day to Emilie Camp, where the familiar tasks of burying cables and draining the overflowing Broembeek were undertaken. The casualties only numbered six, of whom one was killed. The effective strength was 40 officers and 715 other ranks, with 18 officers and 113 other ranks detached.

The first day of the last year of the war came with the Battalion still at Emilie Camp in the Elverdinghe area. On January 19th the cultivation of two acres of ground near the camp was commenced. "Under the leadership of Neild, the agricultural element from the fruit farms of Tiptree or the ploughlands of Newport or Braintree were enabled to display their prowess before their City-bred brethren. The flaw in the scheme was that one reaped

where another had sown. And it demanded a larger share of altruism than is normal to the present development of human nature to work in perspiration for the fruits which would fall to other Divisions at some other date." Light entertainment was provided by the constitution of a popular Brigade concert party, known as the Zero Troupe, and excitement of another nature was provided by the fire at Elverdinghe Chateau, the divisional headquarters. The 10th Essex were transferred to a new camp in the Haringhe area on January 25th, which place they were occupying when January came to an end. The casualties only numbered 14 and the effective strength had risen to 41 officers and 769 other ranks, of whom 25 officers and 656 other ranks were serving with the Battalion.

"THE OLD GUARD."

The 18th Division left Houlthulst Forest sector finally on January 29th and went to Rousbrugge, in Belgium, where, early in February, the reorganization of the Brigade upon a three battalion basis was undertaken. There was a radical change. The 8th Norfolk, 8th Suffolk and 6th Royal Berkshire were disbanded and their places were taken by the 7th Royal West Kent from the 55th Brigade and 8th Royal Berkshire from the 1st Division. "It was with real sorrow that the 10th Essex parted with their staunch companions of the Somme, of Arras and of Ypres, despite the signal honour of being left as the sole original custodians of the rich traditions of the Brigade, and the pride of receiving the title of 'The Old Guard' from their well-loved commander, General Higginson." On February 7th the Brigade was entrained for Noyon and thence marched to Grandru. Battalion headquarters and two companies were sent to Jussy on February 9th and the other two companies to Clastres. There was another move on February 10th, when headquarters and half the battalion were transferred to Remigny, where they repaired the billets and dug-outs, whilst the remaining companies laboured on the Corps defences at Essigny-le-Grand. The next day was spent in work in the vicinity of Ly-Fontaine, where the enemy made things most unpleasant with heavy shelling. A change of scene came on February 14th, when the Battalion marched to Bethancourt, near Chauny. Thence on February 18th one company proceeded to Noyon and two companies to Solancourt, whilst officers and N.C.O.'s reconnoitred the battle zone. The weather was fine and bright and "war, on the extreme right of the British line, was absurdly simple and holiday-like. To prove this, all that one has to do is to point to the casualty list of the Battalion for the period—one man wounded in the nose; and that man was lying on his back on the firestep of a trench watching an aeroplane flight, when a spent bullet from one of the machines dropped inconsiderately upon his upturned face." There was a growing feeling of tension,

however. It was known that the Germans were planning a great offensive and the change of feeling was best exemplified in the work which was carried on. Previously the training had been for attack, but now all ranks were taught methods of resisting advance and of holding on. On February 26th the Battalion relieved the 6th Somersetshire Light Infantry in the battle zone, battalion headquarters and two companies being at Ly-Fontaine and the other two at Remigny, with the surplus personnel at Frieres Camp. The strength of the 10th Essex was still rising, for there were 46 officers and 989 effectives, of whom 34 officers and 881 other ranks were with the unit. On March 1st the Battalion was in Brigade reserve, with two companies at Ly-Fontaine and two at Remigny, but that night one company moved to a forward position at Caponne Farm in response to S.O.S. from the left battalion in the front line. There was a heavy snowstorm on March 2nd, in the course of which the battle positions were deepened and improved. The Battalion went into the left sub-sector of the Brigade front facing Alaincourt on the night of March 5th, where all ranks had a quiet time, save some annoyance by snipers on the left flank. The Battalion was transferred to the Moy sector, on the right, on March 12th, with two companies in front, one in support and the fourth in reserve. Seven days later the Battalion moved back in support, but it was not to rest, for on March 20th, at 2.5 p.m., the "Prepare for attack" message was received. Major A. S. Tween, D.S.O., was in command, Lieut.-Colonel Frizell being on leave. The greatest testing time of the British Armies and of the Battalion was at hand.

RESISTING THE GERMAN ONSLAUGHT.

The German offensive opened in the early morning of March 21st, 1918, at which date Butler's III Corps was on the right of the British line, part of Gough's Fifth Army. The 18th Division was in the centre of the Corps, holding the line which stretched from Travecy to Alaincourt, with the 58th Division on the right and the 14th Division on the left. The great length of front, 42 miles, to which the Fifth Army was committed, caused considerable concern, though the responsibility of the 18th Division was lessened by the fact that the canalized River Oise flowed along the greater part of the trench line ere becoming incorporated in the Hindenburg Line. Behind the 18th Division was the Crozat Canal. The extent to which units were strung out was exemplified in the case of the 10th Essex, who, when in position, were responsible for over two miles. "The C.O.'s tour of the line was arduous in extreme. From Battalion headquarters he would make a start at 4.30 in the morning and it was after 11 o'clock before he had completed his inspection. Long stretches of the line were unmanned; it could not be otherwise. Machine gunners and gunners were

of the utmost importance in a line so thinly held." To assist the defence of the sector three belts were formed, known as the Forward Zone, Battle Zone and Rear Zone, each of which included a number of strong points, so sited as to be of mutual assistance. Both the Forward and Battle Zones were covered by the cross-fire of machine guns, organized in depth and supplemented by Lewis guns. Responsibility for their defence rested upon the Division holding the line. To assist the infantry, the divisional artillery was distributed in depth, with a section of each of the eight batteries in the Forward Zone and two in the Battle Zone or *vice versa*. Guns were also specially assigned to deal with sniping and other troubles. The battery positions were constantly changed and by this policy they mostly escaped the destructive barrage with which the enemy heralded their attack. Another novelty was the placing of wire round the gun positions and the allotment of Lewis guns to the artillerymen to protect the gun teams. Troops in the Forward Zone were disposed so as to make the most efficient use of small numbers. The Vendeuil sector, on the right, for instance, extended about three miles. It was occupied by one battalion, so disposed that the two companies in front had their platoons in depth, with another company in support, posted along the whole of the battalion front. The reserve company supplied one and a half platoons as garrisons for defended localities and the remainder were available for use in counter-attack or to occupy part of the Vendeuil-Ly-Fontaine switch, should occasion require. In each company area was a "keep," in which were placed the reserve S.A.A., rations and water.

On the morning of March 21st the 18th Division had the 58rd Brigade in the left sector and the 55th in the right sector, with the 54th Brigade in Corps reserve in the Caillouel-Rouez area. The first-named brigade had the 8th Royal Berkshire (Lieut.-Colonel Dewing) in the left sub-sector of the Forward Zone, with the 7th Royal West Kent (Lieut.-Colonel Crosthwaite) on the right and the 10th Essex (Major Tween) in the Battle Zone. The 18th Machine Gun Battalion covered the Forward and Battle Zones, except for eight guns, which were in reserve with the 54th Brigade. The 83rd Artillery Brigade was in 58rd Brigade sector and the 82nd in that of the 55th Brigade. The heavy artillery, heavy trench mortars and R.E. were also admirably sited, with the 8th Royal Sussex Pioneers providing garrisons for the defended localities known as "Durham," "Dinky" and "Country" in the Battle Zone. "The weather during the early March days was magnificent. The country up to Fort Vendeuil showed hardly a shell hole. Birds were singing their Spring songs. The first wild flowers were peeping out. The earth of the fields smelled sweet and clean. There was one curious sight; white tendrils of fluff—the output, apparently, of myriads of spinning spiders—spread clinging threads over telephone wires and tree-tops and across miles of growing crops.

It was delightful to be here after the din, the danger and the stinking devastation of Flanders. The Germans gave no sign. Almost up to the day of the attack an inferior Division—the 18th Landwehr—continued to hold the line facing us.” When the day came to a close, however, it was found that no fewer than four divisions had been brought up and launched against the 18th, viz., 34th, 37th, 103rd and 211th, and all with limited objectives, so that greater weight and momentum could be obtained.

At 4.40 a.m. on March 21st the German bombardment started with intense ferocity. Its significance was quickly appreciated and at 5.12 a.m. the battle stations were manned. For two hours the whole area was shelled with gas and high explosive, particular attention being paid to what were presumed to be the gun positions. Then came a similar bombardment of the infantry strongholds, the storm reaching its culmination by the addition of fire from numerous mortars a few moments before the German infantry moved to the assault. Dawn had promised a fine, clear day, but fortune was with the Germans, for a mist developed of a density which was said to excel London’s most concentrated examples. Divisional headquarters were soon enwrapped also in the fog of war. Communications between the Division and the 53rd Brigade, also between 53rd Forward and Battle Zones, were quickly cut by shellfire, and when at 11 a.m. General Lee was again connected with the 53rd Brigade headquarters he found that they were still without definite information as to what had occurred in the Forward Zone, though at that hour the Battle Zone was intact. Thereafter, however, the veil lifted somewhat, though the news was not reassuring. The troops were fighting desperately, but the Germans were in overwhelming force. About noon it was known that the 83rd Artillery Brigade’s forward positions had been over-run by the Germans in the mist, and also that they had burst through the Royal West Kents on the right, though the remnant, under their Colonel, held out in “Durham” and fought until ammunition was exhausted and the survivors were forced to surrender. The last message received from the commanding officer ran: “Holding out, 12.30 p.m. Boches all round within 50 yards, except rear. Can only see forty yards, so it is difficult to kill the blighters.” On the left the news was just as serious. At 1.20 p.m. it was known that the enemy were in possession of the Berkshires’ headquarters at Gunigette Farm and of the high ground at Cerizy, and half an hour later it was clear that the Forward Zone was in enemy custody. The Berkshires fought most stubbornly, as did the divisional gunners. Events later in the day upon the divisional front showed that the resistance and sacrifice of the West Kents, Berkshires and artillerymen had taken the heart out of the enemy offensive in this quarter. The Germans concentrated on the spur by Moulin Farm, opposite the Vendeuil-Ly-Fontaine switch,

in an endeavour to penetrate further, but they were quickly stopped and a similar effort against Caponne Farm was frustrated by the spirited fire of a company of the 10th Essex. It was in this area that Gunner C. G. Stone won the Victoria Cross. He covered the retirement of a battery of the 88rd Artillery Brigade with a rifle, and when the Germans at last outflanked the two rear guns he charged and dispersed them. Later on, he was of a party of six which covered the final withdrawal and captured an enemy machine gun, whilst he also chased a German for one hundred yards until he caught him.

Events had not moved quite so rapidly on the 55th Brigade front, where only one battalion, 7th Buffs, was in the Forward Zone, with the 7th Queen's in the Battle Zone. The 8th East Surrey were in divisional reserve at Haute Tombelle. The critical clash came about noon, when German penetration on the flanks, aided by the fog, enabled them to work to the rear of the 7th Buffs. Vendeuil was soon in their possession, with a strong point close by, known as "Commander." At 2 p.m. it was reported that the Germans had penetrated into the Battle Zone of the 14th Division and were preparing for a further effort against the Battle Zone of the 18th Division, to meet which threat the East Surrey, as divisional reserve, were brought up west of Remigny. The enemy, however, found the mopping-up of the strong points in the Forward Zone a matter of considerable difficulty, particularly at Fort Vendeuil and "Dublin." The position had worsened on the flanks by 3.30 p.m., for the Germans took Hinacourt on the north and on the right they were on the outskirts of Fagniers. These reports caused the East Surreys to man the Gibercourt-Ly-Fontaine switch, so as to present a defensive flank to Hinacourt, and two dismounted cavalry regiments of the 4th Brigade were sent to perform a similar duty on the right. Under cover of these movements the 7th Queen's were ordered to counter-attack on the 55th Brigade's Forward Zone, but before they could do so the German pressure became so pronounced that the movement had to be abandoned. A strong enemy force moved forward again at 5 p.m. and, in doing so, overwhelmed one of the batteries, which had run out of ammunition, and also overcame the stout resistance at Fort Vendeuil. Right and left of the Division the Germans had pushed almost through the Battle Zone and there was risk of isolation. As a consequence orders were given to all troops to withdraw across the Crozat Canal, under protection of the 54th Brigade, then occupying the Caunsale Switch between Montescourt and Ly-Fontaine. This delicate operation was safely accomplished by 6 a.m. on March 22nd. "All through the night bombing aeroplanes flew over, but did little damage, though the country for miles around was illuminated by burning aerodromes, camps and supply dumps, which had been fired by our engineers to prevent material from falling into the hands of the enemy."

On the whole, the 18th Division congratulated itself upon having come through the ordeal with credit, for it had resisted dislodgment from its Battle Zone and felt that, had it been possible, a counter-attack would have restored the Forward Zone.

At 8 a.m. on March 22nd the 54th Brigade (Sadleir Jackson) was posted along the Canal from the eastern edge of Jussy to the northern edge of Menessis, under orders of the 14th Division, whilst the line was prolonged by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade and other troops as far as Quessy. The 55th Brigade (Wood) was in support, in the valley to the north of Vouel and in Frieres Wood, with the 53rd Brigade, first near Frieres Faillouel and later in the day at Rouez. The artillery had been reinforced and were ready for action behind the Bois Hallot, with horse artillery east of Rouez and at Frieres Faillouel, and heavy artillery well posted on Faillouel-Jussy road. The machine gun force was also strengthened and the 18th Division, battered but unbroken, was once again ready for the onslaught. Unfortunately, however, attempts to destroy the bridges between Jussy and Menessis were not successful and on the right Tergnier was lost. It was with some foreboding, therefore, that the 23rd was awaited, for it was known that the Germans were bringing up fresh divisions. The day again broke clear, but foggy, and this aided the Germans in their crossing by the undamaged bridges, though the 54th Brigade fought heroically, Lieut. A. C. Herring, of the 6th Northants, winning the Victoria Cross by his gallantry at Verntague Bridge. The French had taken over the 58th Division's area and so the 55th Brigade, on the right, were the nearest British troops to the French Sixth Army. The latter, with the co-operation of units of the brigade, counter-attacked with the object of regaining the crossing at Tergnier, but the artillery and machine gun fire was too intense. For his intrepid leadership on that occasion Lieut.-Colonel Christopher Bushell, of the 7th Queen's, won the Victoria Cross. The line was gradually forced back, having suffered heavy losses, particularly in and about Frieres Wood. That night the 53rd Brigade bivouacked at Commenchon, the 54th in Caillouel and the 55th in the neighbourhood of Rouez, but from which it was evident that they would have shortly to withdraw.

The spirit of all ranks was good, though physically exhausted by the hard toil and lack of rest. They felt themselves fully capable of holding the enemy and it was not until the danger had passed away that they realized how much the line had been in movement and isolated divisions in danger of envelopment. At daylight on March 24th "the valley between Bethancourt and Caillouel was full of troops, guns and transports, French as well as British, all moving to the rear. It was an unforgettable spectacle. The centre of Bethancourt—whose civilian inhabitants had been sent to the rear the night before—was crammed with

troops and military impedimenta; the straight road that led down into the valley, across the stream, and up again to Caillouel, was just a ribbon of blue and khaki; wagons, lorries and camp kitchens, all moving back—at times, oh, so slowly!” In front of the town were posted the three brigades, with the 55th in the centre and 53rd and 54th on the right and left respectively. The 12th Entrenching Battalion covered the Bethancourt-Caillouel road and the Sussex Pioneers were upon the support line running through Crepigny, with one company on the right of the 54th Brigade to keep touch with the French, who were about Beaugies. The losses had reduced the battalions considerably in strength, notwithstanding the inclusion of battle surplus. The 11th Royal Fusiliers could only muster eight officers and 180 other ranks, and other units were in similar plight. The Germans early showed their intention of pushing on and in the afternoon Caillouel was shelled, followed by a resolute attack, which secured Guivry from the French and forced the latter during the evening to withdraw from Beaugies in the direction of Mancourt. The situation became so critical on the left that another withdrawal took place, this time across the Oise to Pontoise and Varesnes, under the direction of the 1st French Cavalry Corps, to which the Division had been temporarily attached. This onerous task was safely accomplished and was remarkable for the gallant feat of the 54th Brigade, who counter-attacked Babœuf. They wrested it from the enemy, who left 270 prisoners and ten machine guns. This was the last of heavy fighting in this sector. The Division was subsequently withdrawn and after a brief rest became reserve to the 58th Division, which was still holding the line in the Barisis sector. On March 28th, however, orders came to rejoin the Fifth British Army, then nearby Amiens. The change of scene was not for rest, however, because the Division, still very tired, was destined to the relief of other divisions which had been even more highly tried. It was placed between the Marcelcave-Cachy road and the River Luce. At dawn on March 31st the 53rd and 55th Brigades were in position after a long lorry journey in pouring rain, in the following order—53rd Brigade, 55th Brigade and 9th Australian Brigade, with the 54th Brigade, which arrived a few hours later, between Hangard Village and Hangard Wood, thus connecting the French with the left of the 53rd Brigade. “Like the high ground on which Villers-Bretonneux stood, the Gentelles-Cachy plateau gave observation over Amiens. It also dominated the valley of the Avre. Its loss would render untenable all positions east of the Avre, while a withdrawal to the west bank would uncover the great city on the south. Of equal importance, though it was not included in our sector, was the retention of the line of the river Luce, for an advance of the enemy in this direction would outflank Villers-Bretonneux and the Gentelles-Cachy plateau. Lastly, the possession by us

of the village of Hangard was necessary to block the advance of the enemy up the valley of the Luce." Small wonder, then, that the orders were to hold on to every yard of ground. The enemy were active on the right and left and then, on April 8rd, they heavily shelled the whole line, which was a severe trial. Then on the early morning of April 4th came infantry attacks, directed first against the Australians and the 55th Brigade, but which was so well met that they crumpled up. On the left the Germans achieved a slight advance. They made another probe at 4.30 p.m. against Hangard, where the French and 54th Brigade were stationed. They achieved some success and so threatened our hold of this important high ground that the 8th Berkshire were put in to counter-attack and hold up the advance. They were successful in the effort, but at the cost of severe losses, for the battalion at the close of the day had only 58 men at roll call. For a time the situation was very critical, but by means of desperate fighting the hold upon the Hangard line was tightened once more. Three divisions had been launched against this part of the line—9th Bavarian Reserve, Guards Ersatz and 19th, but the only success was an advance here and there to a depth of not more than a thousand yards. On April 12th the enemy were once more launched against Hangard and took it, but by a brilliant counter-attack it was regained. The French and Royal West Kents in the morning got to the western edge and at 7.20 that evening the French and 10th Essex retook it, with 120 prisoners. The enemy's culminating effort came on April 24th, when four divisions, with tanks, swept forward and seized Villers-Bretonneux, among other points. The 18th Division had refitted behind the line and been reinforced by drafts, albeit most of them were quite young soldiers.

The night before, at the headquarters of the 53rd Brigade, General Higginson had been entertained in honour of his promotion to the 12th Division and the party had barely broken up when the thunder of the bombardment shook Boves. Then quickly came orders for the 54th, with the 7th West Kents attached, and Australians to recapture Villers-Bretonneux, which was achieved by a memorable night attack. The position was still uncertain and Hangard Wood, a vital point, was in enemy keeping. Therefore, in the early morning of April 26th, the Moroccan Division, including the Foreign Legion, attacked in company with the 10th Essex and 7th Queen's, of the 53rd Brigade, the two latter directed by General M. G. H. Barker, D.S.O., who had just taken over command. The assault was successful in penetrating the wood, to which the troops clung with tenacity, despite heavy losses. Thus, with splendid fighting spirit, ended the Division's participation in the struggle against the German offensive. During May, June and July the Division held watch and ward opposite Albert, at the same time teaching their business to American units from the 29th and 33rd Divisions. Now for the detailed story of the part played by the 10th Essex.



ROUEZ, MARCH 23rd, 1918. THE FIGHT AT THE KEEPER'S COTTAGE.

On March 19th the Battalion was relieved by the 7th West Kent in the Forward Zone and moved back to the Battle Zone, where, at 2.5 p.m. on March 20th, it was warned to prepare for attack. At 8 p.m. orders were received to be ready to move to battle positions when required and to have a practice stand-to the following morning. March 21st broke fine but mistily. At first all was quiet, but then the hostile barrage opened—"Shrieking, hissing shells, like the tearing of millions of pieces of calico, arrived in continuous unbroken streams; thunderous explosions, like thousands of earthquakes, swayed and rocked the earth." Three of the companies groped their way in the fog to their positions with the reserve company, ready to counter-attack, in the wood at the rear of Ly-Fontaine. Battalion headquarters were at Dartwood Strongpoint, a quarter of a mile behind the village. Heavy casualties were suffered, particularly by "A" Company whilst moving from the dug-outs at Caponne Farm to the trenches. Only one officer of the Company was left unwounded. During the early hours of the attack nothing could be seen of what was happening in front and the first intimation of the situation came from a straggler from the Royal Artillery, who brought the alarming news that the enemy were among the forward guns. When the sun broke through the mist at 11 a.m. "familiar Ly-Fontaine was so transformed that it required an effort of will to believe that it was Ly-Fontaine. It had been blown into ribbons. . . . On the right, between us and Vendeuil Fort, small parties of the enemy could be seen making stealthy advances." Fighting and firing went on all day, in the course of which "A" Company of the Essex beat off an enemy enterprise at Caponne Farm. It was realized that with the threat of envelopment on either flank withdrawal would have to take place and at 9.50 p.m. orders came to retire at 10.30 p.m. across the Crozat Canal at Liez and assemble near the church at Frieres Faillouel. The movement was accomplished without incident and the next day was spent first in reorganization and then in preparing support positions, each company in depth, in front of Frieres. The 10th Essex was the only battalion of the 53rd Brigade which still possessed the greater part of the personnel, the Royal Berkshires, it was observed, having a mixed contingent of headquarters staff, trench mortar men and machine gunners. At night the Brigade was transferred to Rouez Farm, where incoming French troops were cheered. The enemy were advancing again and at 9 a.m. the Battalion hastily took up positions on the road running north and south through Frieres Wood. They were only just in time, for the Germans were upon them, estimated to be three battalions in strength. "On they came, rank after rank, inexhaustible. And the rapid fire crackled out from our thin line like the rattle of a hailstorm on the iron roof. With their bolts working like the 'Old Contemptibles,' the Essex fire scorched through the grey hordes like jets of fire through

withered grass. Then new lines sprang up, to be mown down again until one sickened of the slaughter." Many splendid deeds were performed. "D" Company were seriously mauled by the machine gun fire from a keeper's cottage and lost their gallant Company Commander, Captain Farquhar. Captain Binney, too, was mortally wounded in hand to hand encounter with the enemy. So with many other brave men that day. The most stimulating tribute to their heroism was that paid by the enemy, for when a party of 10th Essex paid a visit to the battlefield a year later they found on the wooden crosses marking the graves of the dead the inscription: "Ein Tapferer Engländer," signifying "A brave Englishman." The War Diary simply states that "the Battalion fought hard and long until both flanks were found to be in the air." The situation seemed desperate, especially on the right. Taking the initiative with the utmost intrepidity, the commanding officer (Major A. S. Tween, D.S.O.) dashed at the enemy on the right with headquarters personnel. They thrust the attackers out, but in doing so Tween was mortally wounded. A respite was gained, but the pressure on the flanks increased and there was grave risk of envelopment. At 6 p.m., therefore, the Battalion withdrew to Caumont, and at midnight to Commenchon, then at 9 a.m. on March 24th to Caillouel, where, with the remainder of the Division, a line of defence was occupied on the eastern side of the village. Shelling and machine gun fire caused some loss, which included Lieut. Hight, of "B" Company. At 8 a.m. on March 25th the 10th Essex marched to Crepigny to hold the line in company with the French and the 55th Brigade, but at 10 a.m. they withdrew to Babœuf, from which place the Battalion fell back, fighting a rearguard action, to the Oise, where it faced about again upon a line two hundred yards north of the river. During the night, however, it crossed at Varennes and covered the passage of the 54th Brigade, who had just made their spirited attack upon Babœuf. The Battalion then moved back to Pontoise and in the early hours of March 26th reached Caisnes. During this time the commanding officer, Major Innocent, was injured and went to hospital. The day was spent quietly at Caisnes, but at night the Battalion was on the move again, this time to Nampcel. Next day (March 27th) the Essex were at Autrechies, where Colonel Frizell resumed command of a hungry and utterly exhausted battalion. Food and drink were supplied by the enterprise of Quartermaster Ord, but of rest there was little. Early on March 29th the Battalion marched to an embussing point, where at midnight that day—after a wearisome lorry journey of twenty hours—the Battalion was debussed at Boves and marched to dig a support position south-east of Gentelles. "In the thick darkness we had no idea where we were, but all was very quiet and the whitewashed houses of the village looked comfortable and inviting. It did not take

long to allot the village for billets, for we found it completely evacuated. We were the sole inhabitants, with every comfort to gladden our tired senses. There were cockerels crowing, hens cackling and pigs snorting, alarmed at the unusual tramp of feet! Hunger had been hard to bear, but here was the reward." The food was thoroughly enjoyed, but not for long, for on March 30th the 5th Australian Brigade was relieved east of Hangard Wood. The next day the 7th Royal West Kent took over from them and the Essex moved back to Gentelles, only, however, to find it crumbling before the enemy's artillery. No fewer than sixteen officers were either killed or wounded in these ten days of fierce trial, the former including Major A. S. Tween, D.S.O., Captain Ivor Hutchison Linford, M.C., Captain Robert Humphrey Binney, Lieut. Henry Charles Hawksworth, M.C., Lieut. J. O. Farquhar, 2nd Lieutenants Herbert Robert Dodd, Norman Dudley John Hight, M.C., and Walter Edwin Hambleton, the last-named from the 4th Essex. Among those wounded and captured was Lieut. J. G. Culver, M.C., who, though seriously injured, went back to "A" Company's headquarters and destroyed the papers ere the enemy seized him. Accidentally injured were Major Innocent and Major A. P. Churchill. Of other ranks, 48 were killed and nine died of wounds, whilst 104 were missing, most of whom were subsequently reported killed. The wounded numbered 154. The casualties thus totalled 328 and the effective strength at the end of the month was 25 officers and 641 other ranks, of whom 17 officers and 588 other ranks were present with the Battalion.

"Whether in or out of the line, life was hectic at this time. The Essex shared short turns of duty with the Royal West Kents. They were at Gentelles on April 2nd, but were moved during the daytime to trenches east of Bois de Gentelles to escape the shelling, returning to billets in the village in the evening. There was expectation of an enemy attack during the heavy rain of April 4th and though it came on the left and right, the Battalion front was undisturbed. During the morning they went back to Gentelles and from there took a defensive line at 4 p.m. through Bois l'Abbe, as the situation around Villers-Bretonneux was obscure. The Essex were then under orders of the 24th Division, but in a few hours reverted again to the 18th Division, taking over the line at Bois Hangard from the Royal West Kents and 11th Royal Fusiliers, a task which was completed at 8 a.m. on April 5th. Captain R. Forbes, M.C., adjutant, in closing a gap which had occurred owing to an error in direction, was wounded in the lungs. The enemy assaulted the line held by the 54th Brigade and "C" Company were enabled to fire with effect upon parties which were concentrating in the valley. First with the 19th Australians and then again with the West Kents, the Essex were in and out of line and on April 12th had occupied the counter-attack position by 11 a.m. Upon arrival

they learnt from the 5th Australian Brigade that the enemy had captured Hangard and they would be required to co-operate with the French (on the right) in an effort to regain it. The Battalion objective was from the road (inclusive) running east and west through Hangard to the copse (inclusive) just north of the village. "C" (left) and "D" Companies were in front, led by Captain A. M. Byerley, with "B" Company in close support and "A" Company in reserve. The forming up point was in the valley below. The Battalion advanced at 7.25 p.m. under a protective barrage, and also encountered much hostile shelling. Nevertheless, the objective was taken and consolidated. Patrols were sent forward and touch obtained with the French and Australians (on the left). Five machine guns and 60 prisoners were captured. The casualties totalled nine officers and 119 other ranks, reducing the average strength of the companies to between thirty and forty men.

RETAKING HANGARD WOOD.

The Battalion was relieved on the night of April 18th-14th by the 18th Australians and marched to Boves, where the Battalion commander, Lieut.-Colonel C. W. Frizell, and the acting second-in-command, Captain W. Skeat, M.C., were evacuated suffering from the effects of gas poisoning, and for a few days Captain Byerley was in command. Lieut.-Colonel Banks assumed control three or four days later upon his return from the Royal Berkshires, and Captain Byerley became, temporarily, second-in-command. Three companies spent the night of April 14th in billets at Petit Gagny, whilst headquarters and "A" Company were at St. Fuscien. The last-named joined the other companies next day. Drafts poured in and a busy time was spent in reorganizing and refitting. The company commanders at this time were: "A" Company, Captain P. Nunn; "B" Company, Captain Mulkern; "C" Company, Captain Chaplyn, and "D" Company, Captain R. Haile, whilst Major J. C. Parke became second-in-command. At 4.40 a.m. on April 24th the Battalion moved near to Boves to be in readiness, for the enemy effort against Villers-Bretonneux had begun. The Battalion slept the night there crowded in practice trenches, at which time the new brigadier introduced himself and was welcomed with a cup of weak cocoa. Next day, at 5 p.m., the Battalion had orders to retake Hangard Wood, with the 7th Queen's on the right and the French Moroccan Division on the left. They passed by Gentelles and took up position before the Wood at 1 a.m. on April 26th, where they dug in upon a frontage of 600 yards. The chief excitement of the early morning was the brigade major, Captain H. James, V.C., riding his horse in front of the troops, almost up to the German position, yet escaping injury. A platoon of "A" Company was detailed to keep liaison with the French on the left. The objective of the Essex was

the road running through the western and eastern portions of the Wood. The advance at 5.15 a.m. was not well supported by artillery fire, shells falling scantily. The leading companies suffered much from enemy machine guns, which remained unsubdued for some time, for three British tanks were unable to locate it at the northern edge of the Wood. Nevertheless, though reduced to a handful, the Battalion took and held their objective, digging in on a track running north and south through the Wood. The casualties were very severe, including twelve officers and 201 other ranks. The strength of the companies was reduced to an average of from sixty to seventy. Eight of the officers joined the night before the Battalion moved out on the 24th and by the 27th only one remained unwounded. Among the decorations awarded for the action were two Croix de Guerre by the French Government.

Lieut.-Colonel Banks, who went over with the third wave, thus graphically describes his experiences : " Had nearly reached the wood border, when ' ping ! ' went something through my boot and a sting in the big toe announced a gold stripe. Hit number one. Could see then that we were in for a rough passage, so pushed forward through the undergrowth to see things straight in the forward lines. Bullets fairly zipping round and vicious cracklings from all sides from Boches concealed in the brushwood. Found that we were properly held up in one corner ; and the French suddenly started a rearward movement, which was spreading paniclike to our own men ; but managed to stem this and we held the ground gained. Nothing for it but to dig in here, so got the men busy, when ' bang ! ' another bullet through the fringe of my sleeve, grazing my wrist and killing a Frenchman behind. About this time my first runner became a casualty, so I went back to headquarters for reports and control and got another one. He, poor fellow, had a short life, for while I was trying to push through the wood to see whether any of our fellows had reached the further side, the Hun laid a trap for us, which did him in. We had got forward with a small party, until we saw some figures beckoning us some fifty yards ahead. Thinking they were some of the leading companies, I went on, until suddenly suspicions flashed over me. Got glasses out to see. They were Boche ! Opened fire on them at once, but the cunning blighters had a m.g. close up on our flank and they let drive simultaneously. Poor Church, a faithful friend of olden days, was killed at my side by a shot through the head and another rapid tear in my sleeve announced a third hit. Remainder of that day and night was spent in reorganization and consolidation. Our worst plight was for officers. Only four remained. We were promised relief that night, but it never came, so had to hang on till the following one. Two hours of continuous strafing on the night of the 26th. Only shell slits saved us from disintegration. Relief came in the shape of the

French battalion Patriache at 2 a.m. on 28th April, and with a few more years on our lives we stumbled through the darkness to the welcome of a sweet couch on a grassy sward within a copse."

The Frenchmen having taken over, the Battalion marched to Amiens the next day and took 'buses for Warlus, far away from the war zone, where the Battalion refreshed, rested and incorporated drafts. On April 30th the strength was 30 officers and 484 other ranks. The extent of the losses for the month may be gauged from the fact that seven officers (2nd Lieutenants J. H. Christy, H. L. Brooke, Francis Alfred John Lawrence, H. G. King, Charles Oscar Percival Carter, Cyril Edward Chaplyn and Morris Dawes) were killed and 17 wounded, including Captain J. A. Battin (U.S.A.), attached. There were 41 other ranks killed, 57 missing and 254 wounded, a total, with officers, of 376.

The chief event of the stay at Warlus was the presentation of ribbons by the Corps commander (Lieut.-General Sir R. H. K. Butler), followed by a brigade march past. On May 5th the Battalion moved by 'bus to Behencourt, where the greater part of the unit was accommodated in the chateau. "Around the steadily crumbling ruins of Laviéville, alongside the well-known Albert—Amiens road, across the hump-back ridge of Nine Elms, down into the erstwhile peaceful billets of Buire, recalling resting times during the winter of 1915, but now, in the hurly-burly of the front line, we took turn and turn about with our brothers of Berkshire and Kent." Near Buire was a former casualty clearing station, from which the men collected many mementoes, one of them having a special taste for clinical thermometers! On May 24th the Battalion marched to a laburnum grove in the valley between Contay and Warloy and stayed for some days, during which, as Lieut.-Colonel Banks recalls, the Essex were successful in annexing the band—instruments and instrumentalists—of the old 12th Middlesex, much to their delight. The casualties were light during the month of May, only numbering 17. The effective strength was 37 officers and 892 other ranks, of whom 31 officers and 777 other ranks were serving with the Battalion, so that great strides had been made in bringing the unit up to strength again.

June opened with the Battalion in the line near to Henencourt Chateau, but with a more restful time. "Here again the original warriors of 1915 were amongst well-known haunts and landmarks. There was Bouzincourt on the northern skyline, sadly shattered now, but still recalling the days of first acquaintanceship with warfare. And down below, beneath our continued scrutiny, the familiar sticks and stones of Albert were being pounded into powder—the leaning Virgin with the Christ-child in her arms deposited at last from her lofty place of vigil over stricken France." Two companies were in the line, with a third ready to counter-attack and the fourth in reserve. The German trenches were raided one night by a party with blackened faces, from "C"

Company, led by Lieutenants Graham and Woodhurst, but only in time to see the last of the Germans in possession hurrying to the rear. Interesting experiences resulted from the instructional visits paid by United States troops. One N.C.O. astonished a company commander by the following informal salutation, "Say, Cap'en, are you the Big Noise round here?" Casualties during June numbered 28 and the strength was 39 officers and 948 other ranks, with 13 officers and 228 other ranks detached.

The first half of July was spent in the same sector, but on July 12th the Battalion was moved to Picquigny, with Battalion headquarters in the Hotel de Ville. There, for the first time for months, both Division and Battalion were more carefree and thoroughly enjoyed the sport and entertainment provided, including a divisional race meeting, which was attended by the Commander-in-Chief. There was a presentation of ribbons by the Corps commander on July 26th and five days later the Battalion was transferred to Querrieu and marched to Bonnav, in the valley of the Ancre. It was full of new life and enthusiasm. There had been six deaths, but the Battalion was almost at war establishment again, having 42 officers and 988 other ranks, of whom 33 officers and 869 other ranks were with the unit.

CLOSING MONTHS: THE BREAK THROUGH.

The last three months of the war for the 18th Division and the 10th Essex were days of strenuous fighting. Casualties were severe, but officers and men were upborne with the knowledge that the enemy was at last on the move from France and Flanders, and that the end of the war was in sight. The Division and the Battalion had the distinction of taking part in the memorable attack of the Fourth Army, under Rawlinson, which, following upon the successful French advance in July, brought the conviction that the enemy offensive had been finally exhausted and that the time had come for successful counter-attack. Early in August the 18th Division was astride the Bray—Corbie road, south-west of Morlancourt. There were obvious signs of an impending move at Picquigny, but gossip pointed to the Belgian front as the centre of interest. On July 19th came Foch's success near Soissons. There were prompt developments. On July 25th Sir Douglas Haig, with Sir Henry Rawlinson and French staff officers, attended the divisional race meeting near Cavillon, which had been suddenly brought forward forty-eight hours. What was not then known was that two days before there had been a conference nearby, at which Foch had indicated his plan of action and that the divisional commander, then on leave, had been warned to return. On July 28th Debeney's First French Army had been placed at Haig's disposal, the latter having decided that he would break the enemy hold upon the Amiens salient. "Never had the Division participated in a battle which was kept so secret. The general plan was communicated to brigade and battalion commanders on 3rd August and it was emphasized that only certain officers should be informed; no other officers, N.C.O.'s and men were to be allowed to learn the date and scope of operation. . . . As the artillery positions were in view of the enemy, there was no preliminary digging of gun pits, no earth was allowed to be upturned; reconnaissance had to be reduced to a minimum; the guns themselves were not to be moved up until the night of the 7th. Also the thousands of rounds of ammunition had to be taken up under cover of darkness and sorted and stacked, and hidden beneath hedges, under banks, among the uncut cornfields. The roads through Mericourt and Heilly on the night of 3rd August offered an unforgettable spectacle; hour after hour, through blinding torrents of rain, there moved an unending stream of ammunition wagons. For three nights these astounding processions continued. But in spite of them, in spite even of the Boche surprise attack of 6th August—the

great secret did not leak out. On a still night the creaking of the wheels of ammunition wagons can be heard a mile away. So still further to deceive the enemy, wheel tyres were lapped with rope, leather washers muffled the play of the wheels, along parts of the Bray-Corbie road straw was laid, as in towns it is laid outside houses where the seriously ill are lying. The tanks, which also are noisy movers, were not brought into the area until the very eve of the battle." The enemy surprise attack, above-mentioned, threatened to disorganize the whole enterprise. It was admirably timed, although the enemy did not know it, because the 58th Division was to come into the line with the 18th Division. To effect this movement the front line battalion of the 54th Brigade (2nd Bedford) was to hand over to the incoming division and then to side-step, so as to take over the ground held by the East Surreys, of the 55th Brigade, as far as the Bray-Cobie road. The ground was honeycombed with a complicated series of trenches, partially dug. This helped to emphasize the delay which occurred in the relief of the units. At this difficult moment, 4.20 a.m. on August 6th, the German guns opened and an infantry attack developed on a two miles front. Against the Bedfords and Surreys was launched the 27th German Division, which penetrated as far as the quarry on the Bray-Corbie road, which was being prepared as the battle headquarters of the 54th Brigade (Sadleir Jackson). The troops rallied splendidly and retook half the ground which was lost, but it entailed the employment of battalions which had been carefully kept in hand for the assault of August 8th. Further, they were ordered next day to retake the Cummins-Cloncurry trenches, with a view to securing forming-up line for the attack. Although it was not completely successful, nevertheless, sufficient ground was secured for the purpose and it was determined that the main attack should proceed, on the 8th, as arranged. It entailed, however, the substitution of the 54th Brigade by the 36th Brigade (Owen) of the 12th Division. The 18th Division had the important mission of protecting the flank of the Fourth Army attack by securing the Bray-Corbie ridge, and on this occasion the British had the advantage of a mist similar to that which had assisted the Germans in March. The 55th Brigade had to take the high ground north of the Bray-Corbie road. They seized Cloncurry trench with difficulty, during which Colonel Bushell, V.C., was mortally wounded, but their further advance was retarded until the rushing of a machine gun post near the Bray-Corbie road enabled them to move forward, despite flank attacks from Morlancourt. At the same time the 36th Brigade went straight forward in an easterly direction and re-entered the old British trenches. They did not, however, reach the road between Morlancourt and Malard Wood, which task was completed by the 10th Essex at a cost of two hundred casualties. The Battalion then went forward for over a mile,

in the course of which it seized two four-gun batteries and their crews. The Essex found that they were in the air, but later on received news that the West Kents, of the same brigade, on the left, had reached the brickyard on the Bray-Corbie road. The enemy fire, which had been desultory, increased in volume and the position of the Essex became critical, despite the advance of the Berkshires on the right to the western edge of Gressaire Wood, overlooking the Somme. "Of the twenty tanks allotted to co-operate with the 53rd Brigade, six had been put out of action before reaching the original front line and none of them arrived on the first objective in time to move off with the Berks. and Essex. One tank did, indeed, reach the southern edge of Gressaire Wood, but by the time the fog lifted, when they might have been of real assistance, most of the tanks had run short of petrol." The machine gun fire of the Germans forced the Berkshires back and at 9 a.m. the 10th Essex retired, after damaging the breech blocks of the captured guns, their eighty men being reduced to fifteen ere they came in line with the Berkshires and West Kents on the first objective. A counter-attack was beaten off in the afternoon. The result was disappointing on the 18th Division front, but it had secured the commanding ground by the Bray-Corbie road and thus facilitated the advance farther south. The next evening the 12th Division and the 83rd American Division achieved substantial success by seizing Chipilly, Morlancourt and Dernancourt. On August 10th Lieut.-Colonel Pritchard-Taylor, of the 54th Field Ambulance, observed that the enemy had retired beyond the ridge covering Bray and succeeded in obtaining sanction for an advance by the Americans of the 53rd Division, which resulted in a move forward, led by Lieut.-Colonel T. M. Banks, of two thousand yards. The small advance party was threatened by Germans creeping through the undergrowth, but at the critical moment the arrival of Lewis gun parties confirmed the Allied troops' possession of the ridge.

Fighting shifted for a few days to the north and then on August 22nd the Fourth Army went forward again. To protect their left flank, the 18th Division had to take Albert and the high ground east thereof. The enemy had relinquished his hold of the western outskirts, but still strongly held the greater part of the town. The 54th Brigade's sector, on the right, comprised a line extending from the Ancres, 500 yards east of Dernancourt, along the railway to the southern outskirts of Albert; thence the 55th Brigade assumed responsibility through the fringe of the town to the flooded portion of the Ancres between Albert and Aveluy. To the 51st Brigade was assigned the objective of Shamrock Hill and the spur running down to the eastern exit of Meaulte, whilst the 55th Brigade was to seize Albert. A battalion of the 12th Division had the task of taking Meaulte on the right of the divisional line. The advance was aided by a gallant

enterprise on the night before (August 21st). Patrols crossed the Ancre and obtained a footing on the Albert-Meaulte road south of Albert and north of Vivier Mill. Trestle bridges were piloted across the river by men of the Fusiliers and Northamptonshires and sixteen of them were in position by 4.45 a.m. By this means the 11th Royal Fusiliers and three companies of the 6th Northamptonshires crossed the river and were upon the Albert-Meaulte road well ahead of time, for an hour had been allowed for crossing the Ancre. There they were joined by the remaining company of the Northampton, which had taken prisoners and a machine gun. The 54th Brigade's offensive was brilliantly successful, their spoils being a German battalion headquarters, the personnel of which was escorted to the rear by a man who had been taken prisoner whilst on patrol a few hours earlier. Unfortunately they suffered the loss of Brigadier-General Sadleir Jackson, severely wounded. Meanwhile, the 55th Brigade had taken Albert, the 8th East Surrey having stubborn fighting in the streets of the town. At the close of the day the line had been well advanced. The work of the division earned the commendation of the commander of the III Corps, who said, "The passage of the Ancre and capture of Albert and the high ground to the east was a difficult operation and was well planned and very well carried out. The enemy still held the high ground to the east, known as Usna Hill and Tara Hill, and the ridge west of Becourt Wood." During the night of 22nd-23rd August the 55th Brigade made good the whole of the objective which had been allotted to them on the previous day and this enabled the 53rd Brigade—less the 8th Royal Berkshire, but with the 7th Queen's to assist them—co-operating with the 118th Brigade of the 38th Division and with the aid of six tanks to seize Usna and Tara Hills by 6 a.m. and capture a gun and 350 prisoners. Captain Bland, of the 10th Essex, did notable work that day, for he rushed three machine guns. The 54th Brigade, by sympathetic action, also did well and advanced their line a thousand yards. In conjunction with the 12th and 58th Divisions, the 53rd Brigade made further progress on August 24th. The last-named had to capture Chapes Spur, due east of Tara Hill, and then form a defensive flank along the trench system immediately north of Becourt Wood. The troops detailed for the operation, 8th Royal Berkshire and 7th Royal West Kent, quickly had their grip upon the whole of the objective except the celebrated La Boisselle crater, which had been formed in July, 1916. There was fierce fighting for the latter and it was not until late in the day that the Berkshires obtained possession of the crater and 250 prisoners. Becourt Wood and Fricourt were taken on August 25th. The enemy were rapidly withdrawing on this part of the front, with the division hard after them. The leading brigade acted as advance guard, the next was organized in depth behind as the main body, and

the third was ready to pass through and take up the duties of advance guard. Mametz Wood and Montauban were passed and at night the 55th Brigade, as the advance guard, had reached the western edge of Bernafay Wood. On August 27th the 53rd Brigade, at the head of the Brigade, was deputed to capture Trones Wood, the understanding being that Longueval and Delville Wood were already in the keeping of the 88th Division. Unfortunately, at the hour of attack, the latter had been driven back for the time being. The Berkshires and West Kents entered the Wood, but found it difficult to hold owing to hostile pressure. At last, despite the reinforcements of two companies of the 10th Essex, they were eventually forced out of the Wood and held on to a line along the eastern edge of Bernafay Wood. That evening, however, a well-organized counter-attack—composed of two companies each of the Essex and Berkshires, led by Lieut.-Colonel T. M. Banks, was entirely successful, the hefty Prussian guardsmen being summarily ejected. The Corps commander was delighted at this feat of arms and expressed “heartiest congratulations on the conspicuous gallantry and tenacity displayed by the 53rd Brigade in the capture of Trones Wood. This exploit is in keeping with the fighting traditions of your Division and reflects the highest credit on all concerned in its planning and execution.” No wonder that when the time came for the 18th Division to make choice of the site for the memorial to their dead they selected Trones Wood. Before August was out the 18th Division had entered Combles and had come up against Morval Ridge.

A great advance was planned for September 1st, whereby the 38th Division (on the left) was directed against Morval and Sailly-Sallisel, whilst on the right the 47th Division had Rancourt and the south-eastern corner of St. Pierre Vaast Wood as their particular objects of attention. The 18th Division, in the centre, had to capture the north-western portion of the Wood and form a line astride the road leading from Rancourt to Sailly-Sallisel. The 55th Brigade, by a boldly conceived encircling movement, succeeded in occupying all their objectives, the 7th Royal West Kent, from the 53rd Brigade, being responsible for the seizure of Sallisel. On September 2nd the whole of St. Pierre Wood passed into the possession of the 53rd Brigade. “The taking of the wood was another example of the methods adopted by General Lee during the period, 22nd August to 5th September, that marked the transition from trench to open warfare. It was an instance of capturing an important position by refusing it, by taking it in side and rear. During the Somme fighting (1916) St. Pierre Vaast Wood cost thousands of French lives. On this occasion the 10th Essex and the 7th West Kents secured the dominating ground on the fringes of the Wood, after which the Wood itself was cleared by two companies of the Berks, who suffered no casualties in the process. All

the trouble that occurred came from hostile shelling when the Wood was in our hands." The Division's fine record to this stage was reviewed by Lieut.-Colonel Sir A. Godley, commanding III Corps, who wrote: "It has to its credit the crossing of the Ancre and the Canal du Nord and the making of bridges over them, the capture of Albert, Tara and Usna Hills, the craters at La Boisselle, Montauban, Bernafay, Trones and Leuze Woods, Combles, Fregicourt, Sallisel, St. Pierre Vaast Wood and Vaux Wood, and the whole of the country as far east as the Canal du Nord, a distance of seventeen miles. 2,464 prisoners and 821 guns and machine guns have been captured by the Division during this period and the fighting has been very heavy. You may well be proud of the valour and endurance which the Division has daily and incessantly displayed." The casualties numbered nearly 3,000.

The next essay of the 18th Division was against the outposts of the Hindenburg Line, which commenced on September 18th and continued for a week. The companion divisions were the 74th (right) and 12th, and the corps was grouped around Templeux-le-Guerard, Ronssoy and Epehy. "A highly important factor in the position was the basin lying inside the triangle formed by the three villages, St. Emilie to the west, Ronssoy to the east and Epehy to the north, and Generals Lee and Higginson proposed that in the initial assault this basin should be avoided, that the 18th Division should attack south of the spur running from Ronssoy to St. Emilie, while the 12th Division should attack west of the spur running from St. Emilie to Epehy. Both these attacks would be secure from the enemy defences within the basin, and, being on narrow fronts, would have the great advantages of concentrated artillery barrages and flanking machine gun protection. Our R.E. made most beautiful and realistic dummy tanks, and placed them in well-exposed positions as if entering the basin, but visibility was so bad that they never drew fire. The heavy labour expended was not entirely lost, as the 'tanks' provided most excellent accommodation for a divisional conference held in stormy weather on the 19th. It was further arranged that after passing through the villages the attacking troops were to wheel inwards and roll up the enemy's main line of defence, which ran along the ridge joining Ronssoy and Epehy." The 18th Division was to be launched from the sector east of St. Emilie and this was occupied by the 8th Royal Berkshire on the night of 16th-17th September. The 53rd Brigade was temporarily of skeleton proportions, for the remaining units had been attached to other brigades. The 7th West Kent were sent to the 54th Brigade and the 10th Essex to the 55th Brigade, the latter with the role of a counter attack battalion. The 54th Brigade was on the right, in touch with the 74th Division, and the 55th Brigade on the left. The battalions went over singly, the second leap-frogging through the first and the third being disposed so as to take up the attack

from the second battalion and occupy the final objective. The 7th West Kent had a fairly easy task to get into the southern portion of Ronssoy and the Bedfordshires, following up, crossed the Hussar Road, except the portion on their left. The 11th Royal Fusiliers and the 6th Northampton were then to move forward, but the enemy resistance strengthened and it transpired that not only was the line held by the 1st Guard Grenadier Regiment of the 2nd Guards Division and by units of the 232nd Division, but the 121st Division had been brought up. The 56th R.I.R. attacked late that afternoon with the intention of taking Ronssoy. Thus the 18th Division had not only to face the troops in position, but the assault of a fresh regiment. Nevertheless, the struggle was persistently maintained, though the 12th Division was finding difficulty in overcoming the opposition at Epehy from the Alpine Corps. Many memorable deeds were done that day, the most outstanding being the single-handed capture of two German machine guns and their crews by Lance-Corporal Lewis, of the 6th Northamptons, whom he bombed into submission. He was killed by a stray shell, so that he never knew that the Victoria Cross had been awarded him. The same story is told of the 55th Brigade. The men stubbornly pushed forward, notwithstanding heavy machine gun fire, and gained ground, though not to the extent designed, as, owing to causes beyond the Brigade's control, they were late in reaching their forming-up place and so could not keep up with the barrage. The struggle was intense and among the heroes of the day was the brigadier, General Wood, who, armed with an alpenstock and a big cigar, entered a dug-out and captured seven Germans. He also secured another 22 prisoners, who gave themselves up from a dug-out after he had "strafed" it with lumps of chalk and odd boots. The day's victory was not as complete as had been hoped, but Ronssoy was captured, together with the greater part of Ridge Reserve, of Lempire and Colleen Posts and Shamrock Trench, the last-named in the neighbourhood of the Bellecourt-Epehy road. Some hundreds of prisoners were taken, including many of the Guards Regiment, which had held Ronssoy. On September 19th the West Kents and Berkshires, of the 53rd Brigade, endeavoured to clear the northern part of Lempire and form a line east of the village, this in an effort to keep touch with the 12th Division. Despite heavy losses, the object was achieved, the booty including an unopened German mailbag. By day and night units of the Division kept biting at the line and taking choice morsels in the form of strong points and copses, and when this phase of the struggle ended the three divisions had made good at Templeux-le-Guerard, Ronssoy and Epehy.

THROUGH THE HINDENBURG LINE.

The movement of the Allied forces could not be stayed and up against the Hindenburg system surged the Fourth Army.

Trench redoubts, known as Duncan Post, Doleful Post, Egg Post and Tombois Farm, covered Guillemont Farm and the Knoll, which, if taken, would lay bare the Hindenburg Line itself to assault. The "key" struggle, therefore, raged furiously on both sides. "It was ceaseless, wearing, unspectacular fighting, this hotly contested series of struggles for the possession of small lengths of trenches that finally led to the triumphant breaking of the Hindenburg Line." The Division still had the 74th on the right, and the 12th on the left. The 10th Essex, of the 53rd Brigade, were put in against the Knoll, a height which had to be taken ere Vendhuile could be entered, and the West Kents against Sart Farm, which lay between the Knoll and Lempire. They had seven tanks to assist them. The 54th Brigade was set to capture the trenches between the Knoll and Guillemont Farm, which latter strongly fortified point was the objective of the 231st Brigade of the 74th Division. The West Kents seized Sart Farm and the 54th Brigade made some progress, but a portion of the 10th Essex was held up at the Knoll spur, Tombois Farm, by shattering machine gunfire from both flanks. Most of the tanks were destroyed. The other portion of the Essex got to Egg Post, but a counter attack forced them back to Pomponious Lane and Fleeceall Lane. The progress was very limited and the losses fell severely upon the 10th Essex, who had 280 casualties. They were placed in divisional reserve to recruit. The attempt was renewed in moonlight and again made some progress, which was completed the next day, when Duncan and Doleful Posts, among others, were seized, the enemy suffering very much in fruitless counter attacks. Egg Post, however, still held out, despite efforts by the West Kents and Essex, of the 53rd Brigade, on September 23rd and 24th. The Division was succeeded by 2nd American Corps and went back to Nurlu for an essential rest, for all ranks had reached exhaustion point. They had the gratification of a cheering message from the Fourth Army commander, who reminded the 18th and three other divisions that they had been fighting continuously since August 6th. "Although opposed to Alpine Corps and four of the finest German Divisions, two of which have reinforced the line within the last forty-eight hours, they have by determination and hard fighting gained ground which is of the greatest importance and which captured German maps show to be part of the main Hindenburg defences, and to be held at all costs."

The Division was allowed little rest, however. Certain fresh divisions were held in hand so that they could push forward with the utmost speed towards Le Cateau when the Hindenburg Line had been passed. Hence it was that the 18th Division was again called upon, this time in company with the 27th and 30th Divisions. The main attack was undertaken by Australians and Americans, and the 12th and 18th Divisions, of the III Corps, were to cover the left flank. The latter division's special

responsibility for September 29th was, firstly, to protect the left flank of the 27th American Division by obtaining observation over Vendhuile and the St. Quentin Canal and keeping the enemy busy in that neighbourhood; secondly, Vendhuile, when taken, had to be mopped up quickly, so that the V Corps should pass through as rapidly as possible. The 54th Brigade was given the first objective and the 55th the second, a link being formed by a battalion of the 54th Brigade and the 107th Americans. Half a battalion of the 18th Battalion Machine Gun Corps was allotted to each brigade. The attack did not eventuate as expected. The 54th Brigade made some progress, but the 27th American Division, though fighting gallantly, was not able to get forward as expected and so the 55th Brigade did not advance as arranged. The situation was the reverse of satisfactory, but the 46th Division had made its presence felt lower down the line and as a consequence the enemy was forced to withdraw, the 18th Division quickly following them into Vendhuile. The 53rd Brigade, who had been in Corps reserve during the night of September 30th-October 1st, took over the sector north-west and west of Vendhuile, held by the 37th Brigade of the 12th Division. The infantry of the Division were relieved on the night of 1st-2nd October and went to Montigny, but the divisional artillery remained with the 50th Division. During these desperate days the Division lost 2,573 officers and men, but they had captured 1,415 prisoners, as well as four heavy guns, some field guns, 17 trench mortars and 122 machine guns. All ranks left with a cheery message from the Corps commander, in which he conveyed his thanks at the way in which officers and men had always "played up."

The 18th Division was not back in the line again until October 19th, in time, however, to take a prominent part in the decisive events of the last month of the war. "The advance commenced at Le Cateau, which had been captured by the 66th Division on 18th October, and it proceeded in a north-easterly direction through Bousies, Robersart, Preux-aux-Bois, Hecq, the Forest of Mormal and Sassegnies as far as the Sambre river to a point just west of Leval. This represented an advance of nearly fourteen miles in a country of abrupt slopes, small streams in the valleys, large tracts of woodlands, including the great Forest of Mormal, and innumerable plots of pastureland enclosed by high thick hedges." The Division was warned for the front again on October 19th, for the Fourth Army had to protect the flank of the Third Army and to so advance that Leval, an important railway junction, was placed under artillery fire. As part of the XIII Corps (Morland) the 18th had the 25th Division on the right and the 33rd Division (Third Army) on the left, and it concentrated in and around Le Cateau on the night of 20th-21st October, with the tanks concealed about Montay. Attached troops included a squadron of the Northumberland

Hussars, a company of the 18th Cyclist Battalion, 16 tanks of the 10th Tank Battalion (one section each to the 53rd and 54th Brigades and two sections to the 55th Brigade), six supply tanks, wireless tank, cable-laying tank and the 100th Battalion Machine Gun Corps, which was used only for the purposes of the opening barrage. The 53rd (right near to Le Cateau) and 54th Brigades were to commence the attack, whilst the 55th Brigade, with the 6th Northamptonshires from the 54th Brigade, was to pass through in the endeavour to capture a series of objectives lying beyond Bousies. The 53rd Brigade (with the 10th Essex on the left of the West Kents and Berkshires) crossed the swampy Richemon River and reached within three hundred yards of the sunken road, which was their final objective. There the Essex were held up by machine gun fire, but, in company with the Berkshires, who had followed up, aided by the advance of the 54th Brigade on the left upon Epinette, the resistance was overcome, when they found the sunken road was lined with machine guns. Then came the effort of the 55th Brigade, who were to capture Bousies and Robersart and seize the Landrecies-Valenciennes Road. They did not accomplish all this ambitious programme, but when the day closed they were fighting in Bousies. The Division had fought forward 8,000 yards and taken 53 guns. Next day the advance went on implacably among the orchards of Robersart, which had been wired, with observation lanes cut so that the oncoming infantry could be observed. There was further stiff fighting for the village, in the course of which Lieut. Hedges, of the 6th Northamptonshires, won the Victoria Cross for his daring exploit of taking six machine guns and fourteen prisoners near Rennart Farm. On October 26th, in heavy rain, the Essex and Berkshires, of the 53rd Brigade, pushed on to take a point known as "Mount Carmel," lying nearly a mile away. It was a cultivated field, lying slightly higher than the surrounding country, and the approach was over ground intersected with thorn hedges and streams. The battalions did not reach the objective, for they were held up by machine gun fire. It was found that the position which had been reached, the sunken road east of the Robersart-Englefontaine road, was a better line and this was immediately consolidated.

The 55th Brigade went forward another 250 yards on October 27th and though there was changing of plans for some days, the next real advance was timed for November 4th and it proved the last hostile encounter of the 18th Division in the war. The movement was in two phases. In the first the 25th Division was to seize the crossings of the Sambre-et-Oise Canal, whilst the 50th and 18th Divisions were to take Preux-au-Bois by envelopment. In the second phase the 66th Division was to pass through the 25th Division. The 50th Division was to cross the Canal and advance on the southern bank, whilst the 18th Division was to progress north of the Canal, after which it was

to be squeezed out by the junction of the 50th and 33rd Divisions east of the Canal. General Lee's last operation order found active employment for each battalion of the Division. The 6th Northampton (54th Brigade) and the 7th Royal West Kent (53rd Brigade) were to capture ground beyond Hecq and just east of Preux-aux-Bois. The 2nd Bedfordshires (54th Brigade) were to take the latter village, with the assistance of the 11th Royal Fusiliers. The 10th Essex (Lieut.-Colonel Forbes) and 8th Berkshire (53rd Brigade) were to seize a "red" line which ran through the western edge of the Forest of Mormal. The 7th Queen's, 7th Buffs and 8th East Surrey, of the 55th Brigade, were then to go straight through the forest and occupy another line east of the straight road running from north to south on the east of the Forest, called the "green" line. "It was decided that troops should move, where possible, along the edges of the uncut portions of the Forest, large patches of which had been felled by the Boche, and special arrangements were made to picket the sides. The importance of the capture of the Forest lay in its offering the short way to the Sambre Valley and Maubeuge." In addition to the usual attached troops there was a section of armoured cars. Hecq was quickly seized, the inhabitants being greatly excited at their liberation. It is said that one gallant officer, in order to secure the prompt evacuation of the occupants of a farmhouse, put his steel helmet upon a small child of three and then wheeled the family perambulator. The "red" line was reached about midday. Preux-aux-Bois, as its name implies, was situated in the midst of woodland, but the spire of the church served as a guide, and it was occupied in due course. The severe fighting had somewhat delayed the onset of the Essex and Berkshires, but with real intuitive leadership the difficulty was overcome by Colonel Forbes, who discovered a gap of 200 yards in the enemy's line, led his men through it, and then went on to take the support lines whilst the enemy front line was still in action. This had an immediate effect and with the Royal Berkshires the "red" line was reached at 2.30 p.m. An hour later the 55th Brigade went on from this point, right through the Forest, led by two armoured cars. And at 7 p.m. the "green" line was occupied. The Division was gratified to receive Rawlinson's congratulations that evening—"The precision with which the various columns advanced through the forest shows the staff work and leadership were thoroughly good, whilst the gallantry and determination of the troops was deserving of high praise."

The 54th Brigade spent the night in Preux and were then taken back to Le Cateau. "Perhaps the last sight of the Great War vouchsafed to them was the spectacle of a stout French woman of Preux chasing a big German down the street with a pitchfork in her hand." The other Brigades resumed the advance, the 55th leading. At 7.45 a.m. on November 5th

Sassegnies was occupied. Then, later in the day, came orders for the 53rd and 54th Brigade to pass into reserve. This the former proceeded to do, followed by the 55th, when the two flanking divisions (33rd and 50th) had united at 7.30 p.m. on November 6th, on the railway east of Leval. This was the last incident of the war for the Division. In the final push nearly 2,000 casualties had been sustained, but they were almost balanced by the prisoners taken (1,528), together with 15 heavy guns, 33 field guns, 42 trench mortars and 297 machine guns. When the Armistice came the units of the Division were cantoned in and around Le Cateau.

G.O.C. Fourth Army highly complimented all ranks of the Division upon their work, specially calling to mind "the strenuous times before Gentelles and Cachy, the taking of Albert and Meaulte, the capture of Bernafay and Trones Woods, the forcing of the Tortille River, the battles around and beyond Roussoy and, finally, the attacks on Bousies, Hecq and the Forêt de Mormal." The King and Prince of Wales inspected the Division (11,000 strong) at a final review on December 2nd, after which Major-General Lee, in an order of the day, reviewed the achievements of the Division, in the course of which he said it had "proved itself equally strong both in attack and defence, and has earned a reputation second to none."

From December to January the troops were employed in clearing the battlefield, the 7th Buffs having the misfortune to lose ten men by the explosion of a shell. Demobilization proceeded gradually. General Lee left in January to take over demobilization duties at Tunbridge Wells and Brigadier-General O. C. Borrett assumed command until March 19th, when the final order for demobilization was issued.

THE LAST BATTLES OF THE BATTALION.

Now for the story of the 10th Essex in these last fateful months of the war. The Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel T. M. Banks) was at Bonnay when the month of August opened, passing "a few days of excessive happiness, with short hours of work and long hours of laziness in the sun, or bathing in the wooded streams below, whenever the Boche was not in irate mood and venting his spleen by shelling them." Then came an atmosphere of tension. Great things were impending. On the afternoon of August 6th came the order to prepare to move at dark. Next day was spent in preparation and at 10 p.m. the Battalion moved off, company by company, to the Bray-Corbie road, reaching the Clermont line at 2 a.m. on August 8th. Hot tea and rum were served whilst waiting for zero hour, but just before dawn a mist enwrapped the whole area, so that at the moment of attack "it was barely possible to see beyond the glowing cigarette ends of the nearest gallant fellows of the advancing line. Down into a valley and then up the slopes on the other side brought us into the thick

of the German barrage, and shells, smoke, fog and a blazing tank split the companies up out of all formation, and the isolated parties pressed forward as best they could." The Battalion passed through the 12th Division, keeping the Bray-Corbie road on the left. "B" and "D" Company commanders (May and Daniel) were soon hit and the advance became so confused, owing to the conditions, that parties went forward under the leader on the spot. C.S.M. Moyse was particularly noted for his bravery. "It was eerie work, calling for more than a little faith and confidence, to press on for kilometres into the unknown. Enemy machine guns, invisible in the fog, but unpleasantly active, were still in action on every hand. Some of them we struck and silenced. Others were farther away and those had to be left to the attention of troops we hoped were coming up on the flanks. Gradually the machine guns were outdistanced, though their clatter continued ominously until it grew fainter and fainter as we pushed on in the uncanny wastes of woolly mists." Arrived at the first objective, no troops were found on the flanks, but the barrage was lifting and so it was decided to move forward, though as the dwindling party of the Essex crept on no other support was met except a tank firing on the Bray-Corbie road. Nevertheless, the brickfields near the Bois des Tailles, the final objective, were reached and a great prize was taken almost at the same moment. As the fog lifted the Essex men found themselves within sight of the northern continuation of Gressaire Wood, but in their immediate vicinity lay two four gun batteries (4.2 and a whizz-bang). The gunners, men of splendid physique, were spending an idle hour or two when the Essex broke in upon them. The surprise was too complete for effective resistance and soon the prisoners, having offered peace with souvenirs in the shape of revolvers and field glasses, were marched to the rear in charge of a wounded man. "As the party started off, Colonel Banks called out a final order; the prisoners, startled and afraid, thought that the Colonel had decided that it would be a wise solution to shoot them. The Boche has faith in the efficacy of gifts—and, in their distress, those of the prisoners who had nothing else to offer pulled off their boots and, with ingratiating gestures, laid them at the Colonel's feet. The Colonel, like a good opportunist, appreciated that a bootless Boche would find it difficult to run away, so he accepted the boots and sent off the prisoners in their stockinged feet." The Essex had been reduced to eighty men, but, nevertheless, they set about methodically doing what they could to consolidate, with "A" Company (right), "B" Company (centre) and "D" Company (left), with "C" Company upon a defensive flank. The 8th Royal Berkshires had been ordered to pass through the Essex, but the misty weather had caused disorganization and not only were the Berkshires late, but the units on the flank had not arrived. The position was extraordinarily difficult. The

Essex seemed to have walked into "the blue." Colonel Banks reported his position and awaited events. About 8 a.m. Captain A. V. Macdonald linked up with his company of the West Kents, after having successfully pushed the enemy back along the Bray-Corbie road. This was a welcome reinforcement, but it was too scanty should the enemy determine to counter-attack. And there was evidence that he was making active preparations. Gressaire Wood was still in his possession. The anxiety of the situation was, however, again relieved by an incident which had its element of humour. "The major commanding the guns taken by the Essex had his quarters in a dug-out in the wood and knew nothing of their capture. He had spent a peaceful morning, believing that the British attack was a purely local one, and he thought that it had now died away. But a message from the German headquarters farther back informed him that things were much more serious and that his guns must maintain their fire. He came unsuspectingly out of the wood, walking easily, a big hairy fellow, flicking the heads of the standing corn with his cane and smoking a cigarette. Then suddenly a dozen rifles were levelled at him and he quickly followed the crews of his batteries to the rear." The incident was noted in Gressaire Wood and a field gun opened fire, presage of the movement which subsequently caused the gallant handful to retire. The non-arrival of supports determined Colonel Banks that he could not hold on, particularly as the enemy were working round his flanks and were placing machine guns on the side of the road by which he would have to withdraw. He damaged the breech-blocks of the captured guns and then steadily retired, posts facing about and holding the enemy in check. Machine gun and artillery fire increased in intensity and then the remnants of the Battalion scattered and made their way back to the first objective, having at one time only a bottleneck of 800 yards within which to escape the enemy net. Among those who were wounded was Captain R. Forbes, the Adjutant, who begged that he should be left behind, but such a wish could not be complied with and so, by the aid of the C.O.'s shoulder, he was able to limp back into safety. Many decorations were awarded for this feat, with two recommendations for the V.C. The casualties included thirteen officers and 271 other ranks (24 missing), of whom five officers, Captain Phillip Harvey, 2nd Lieutenants Richard Valentine Flin, James Wood, A. Woods and Percy Cowdell Cleall, were killed, with 56 other ranks.

HOW THE BATTALION FLAG WAS RECOVERED.

The Battalion (under Major J. C. Parke) moved to Burke Trench on August 9th, but with very depleted numbers, the companies having to be organized for the time being upon a two platoon basis. In addition to the casualties, many men had become mixed with other units and were constantly reporting.

The next night the 10th Essex vacated its position astride the Bray-Corbie road and marched to billets at Baizieux. Before that happened, however, the 27th American Division had passed through and driven the Germans back, followed by many Essex men, who found much spoil in the dug-outs. To their intense delight, they also found the battalion flag, which had been lost in the retirement, wrapped in brown paper and addressed for despatch to Germany! At Baizieux Colonel Frizell resumed command and Colonel Banks was posted to the command of the Berkshires. On the night of August 11th-12th the Battalion went back to the front line on the Albert-Amiens road, where Lewis gun posts were constructed in front of the section held by the left company. There was only slight enemy shelling and the casualties were slight. Upon relief on the night of August 15th the Essex men went to Henencourt Chateau, and there were joined by a draft of 224 other ranks, mainly from the Worcesters and Staffords. On August 17th the 7th Queen's were relieved on the Seultes Road, with Major J. C. Parke in command, Colonel Frizell having become temporary brigadier. Then on August 22nd came more fighting. The Battalion moved up to the Albert-Amiens road, where it awaited orders. Instructions came for the attack on Tara Hill, the defences of which they helped to construct in 1915, and at 11 p.m. the 10th Essex moved off in companies in alphabetical order to the assembly position, which ran from the light railway to the corner of Bellevue Farm.

"A" Company (Tebbutt), on the right, and "B" Company (Bland) led the attack, with "C" (Wenley) in support, as the counter-attack company, and "D" Company (Binley) forming a defensive flank. The last-named also had a section of the M.G.C. Tanks co-operated with the Battalion. The advance commenced at 4.45 a.m. on August 23rd and by 6 a.m. the Battalion had gained the hill, providing a jumping-off place for the Berkshires, who were to pass through them. The casualties were considerable, including six officers, of whom Captain Roger Joseph Tebbutt (Cambridgeshires), Lieut. H. Orfeur and 2nd Lieut. Percy Augustine Binley, M.C., were killed. Of other ranks 26 were killed, 145 wounded and 35 were missing, a total of 212.

A patrol, under 2nd Lieut. Lawson, reconnoitred Becourt Wood on August 24th, and was fired on from front and flanks. A second patrol, under Lieut. Fraughton, had better luck later on. It made its way through the Wood and obtained touch with the Royal West Kents on the left. The battalions of the 53rd Brigade went back to the support line that night and next day Lieut.-Colonel Frizell resumed command of the Battalion. A bathe in the Ancre was much enjoyed. By way of Mametz, the Brigade moved forward, though much troubled by heavy shelling, which killed two and wounded nine others. It also found the transport horses, ten of which were killed or wounded. The Brigade became the advanced brigade on August 27th, with

the 10th Essex in brigade reserve. The Berkshires and West Kents had seized Trones Wood, but were forced back by the counter-attack of the German II Guards Grenadier Regiment. In these circumstances, "C" Company (Wenley) and "D" Company (Morrow), of the 10th Essex, were ordered up to reinforce the Berkshires. The renewed attack took place upon the southern portion of Trones Wood at 7 p.m. and the Essex men went forward with the Berkshires to the assault, triumphantly ejecting the Guardsmen, of whom seventy were brought back as prisoners. The Battalion lost 17 killed and 35 wounded. The congratulation wires included one from General Higginson, the old brigadier, "Well done, 53rd Brigade."

The Battalion took over the northern portion of Montauban on relief by the 11th Royal Fusiliers and, as evidence of how familiar villages and landmarks had been blotted out, it was written: "From Caterpillar Wood, an early conquest of the 10th Essex in the 1916 battle, the Battalion was ordered to take up a covering line running through Leuze Wood—euphoniously known as Lousy Wood in the vernacular of the British Army—and Major Parke (August 29th) went forward with two of the company commanders to reconnoitre. Bernafay Wood, Trones Wood, Montauban and Guillemont were all very nicely and clearly marked on the maps, but on the ground it was difficult to distinguish where wood began and ended, or, indeed, that these were truly woods at all, except for some shattered trunks dotted here and there. And when the party reached the middle of Guillemont village Parke was still vainly searching for it, as not one brick could be seen standing upon another. Even some gunners, whose battery was planted in the centre of it, could throw no light as to where the village was." For some days the Essex and West Kents occupied Leuze Wood, where the former received drafts totalling 367, so that at the close of the month the strength was 34 officers and 998 other ranks, of whom 25 officers and 832 other ranks were serving with the Battalion.

ST. PIERRE VAAST WOOD.

The forward movement went on with great activity and on September 1st the Essex knew that the 53rd Brigade would again be involved in a day or two. The enemy had to be thrust from St. Pierre Vaast Wood, and the 10th Essex and the 8th Royal Berkshires were deputed to undertake the task, the special objective of the former being the north-eastern section, whilst the Berkshires were first to form a defensive flank and then clear the southern portion. The Battalion concentrated on the edge of the main Guillemont-Combles road and about 3 p.m. moved across country, where, under cover of a hill, they awaited events. The Essex commenced the move to the assembly positions at 2 a.m. on September 2nd, and had formed up by 3.30 a.m., though shellfire had caused a good deal of trouble.

The attack went forward at 5.30 a.m. and was successful, though great difficulty was experienced in maintaining direction through the tall undergrowth, which concealed numerous shell-holes. Touch was secured with the Berkshires. Consolidation was hampered by heavy shellfire and there were rumours of a counter attack, which, however, did not materialize. Next day (September 3rd) "A" and "B" Companies were ordered to push on through St. Martin's Wood, which was done, and the remainder of the Battalion moved up in support. "D" Company were, later in the day, directed to make an endeavour to seize the bridges across the Canal du Nord and the River Tortille should they meet with no serious opposition, but immediately they approached them artillery and machine gun fire opened, so that the company had to content itself by occupying the eastern edge of Hennois Wood. During the following day "D" Company again tried to establish posts across the canal and river and one platoon (Lieut. Holt) was successful, followed by another, under 2nd Lieut. Ovendon, who occupied a trench, but was driven back at about 7 p.m. by machine gun fire. This platoon and another, under 2nd Lieut. Lord, again succeeded in crossing and reinforced Lieut. Holt, also obtaining touch with the 38th Division. Lieut. Holt had, meanwhile, received intimation from the Welsh Regiment that fire from a strong point on the platoon's front was holding up the Battalion, so he promptly captured the strong point, taking two officers and 15 other ranks prisoners. "D" Company thus made good the crossing and covered the passage of the remaining companies, who passed through early on the morning of September 5th. Before it was relieved the Company had made good the eastern edge of Riverside Wood. The Battalion was relieved by the 9th Essex, of the 12th Division, and marched back to Faviere Wood on September 6th, where ten days' rest was enjoyed. Then on September 16th the 10th Essex embussed on the Montauban-Guillemont road and proceeded to Epinette and Nurlu Woods, The Battalion, under Major Parke, with the West Kents, was attached to the 55th Brigade, but whilst the latter were actively employed in the attack upon Ronssoy from the direction of St. Emilie, the Essex were in support. The fighting was confused, but successful, and though at one time it looked as if the services of the 10th would be needed, they were not utilized and they went into divisional reserve west of Ronssoy Wood.

TOMBOIS FARM.

Information came that an attack would be made on September 21st. A reconnaissance of the ground was undertaken in which Major J. C. Parke was wounded, and Lieut.-Colonel Frizell returned from brigade headquarters to assume command. The outline of the main attack has been given above, but the 10th Essex had a task of exceptional difficulty. "A" and "C" Companies had

to capture a line through the eastern edge of Fleeceall Post and Egg Post, upon which "B" and "D" Companies were to leapfrog and seize the line through Tino, Lion Trench and Knoll Trench. Though they had the assistance of seven tanks, the task was rendered more difficult by a change of plan which left their flank exposed. Battle headquarters were at Yak Post. By 8.30 a.m. on September 21st the companies were ready, the barrage opened at 5.40 a.m. and the two leading companies were in movement at 6.7 a.m. On the right "C" and "D" Companies reached Grafton Trench and on the left "A" and "B" Companies got within 200 yards of Tombois Farm, when the attack was held up by machine gun fire from the flanks and from the Farm. Four of the tanks had been put out of action and the remainder got too far ahead of the infantry. It had been, perhaps, the most trying experience for the 10th Essex in the war. They had struggled heroically, but the enemy position was too strong and the attack withered away. The survivors withdrew to the front line, whilst a composite platoon, under the R.S.M., was left as garrison of Yak Post and did not return until September 23rd. The losses were very heavy, being added to by the wounded who fell into the hands of the enemy. One casualty, Lieut. H. G. Parrack, dropped into a shell-hole with a shattered knee and lay there for three days, whilst shells of all nations fell round him in deadly rivalry. Yet he survived and was rescued when the Americans went forward. The losses of the Battalion totalled 280, of whom 67 were buried in Lempire Cemetery. Among the officers killed was 2nd Lieut. William James Carter.

The 10th Essex had not done with Tombois Farm and its vicinity. "C" and "D" Companies were detailed to capture Egg Post, so at 7.30 p.m. on September 24-25th two platoons of "D" Company formed up in two files in front of Doleful Post, facing Egg Post, and a platoon of "C" Company did the same immediately west of Tombois Farm, also facing the objective. The enterprise commenced at 10.30 p.m., but was not as successful as was hoped. "D" Company was held up by machine gun fire fifty yards west of Egg Post and though another platoon was sent to reinforce it, no further progress was made. Later, Lieut. L. W. Mason eased a critical situation by rushing a machine gun, which was captured, but Egg Post remained unconquered. The Essex, however, had no more to do with that bloodstained territory, for that night they went back to St. Emilie and then, on September 26th, to Priez Farm. There they had hardly shaken themselves down when orders came for the neighbourhood of Epchy, which was reached on September 29th. The following day the 55th Brigade took Vendhuile and at night the 10th Essex were in the line at Essus Wood, which overlooked the St. Quentin Canal. It was not a long spell, however, for the Division was withdrawn the next day to

Allonville, near Amiens. The month's casualties had been very severe, totalling nearly 400. The Battalion strength was returned at 26 officers and 683 other ranks, of whom 19 officers and 568 other ranks were with the unit.

THE FINAL ACTION.

Captain R. Forbes, D.S.O., M.C., assumed temporary command of the Battalion on October 8th. Colonel Frizell had been promoted as a brigadier in the 25th Division and Lieut.-Colonel Banks had resumed command. He had, however, to take a Staff College course and so handed over to Captain Forbes, who, in the course of a few days, was succeeded by Major A. P. Churchill. On October 17th the Battalion was transferred via Villers Faucon to shelters west of St. Emilie, from which it embussed the next day for Premont. The 10th Essex were destined for the line again and moved on October 20th to Reumont, having sent the battle surplus to Elincourt. The following day Le Cateau was reached, where orders were received that the 53rd Brigade would attack with the 10th Essex and 7th Royal West Kent, the 8th Royal Berkshire passing through. October 22nd was spent in issuing fighting kit and officers' conferences. At 6 p.m. all was ready and the Essex moved off to the assembly positions in the railway cutting east of Le Cateau, into which they had settled just after midnight, despite considerable shelling. The Battalion's objective was a sunken road leading from Pommereuil to Forest. The attack was conducted under a creeping barrage moving forward at the rate of one hundred yards in four minutes. A tank was attached, with the duty of overcoming any "hold-up," at a strong point, but, unfortunately, did not participate. "A" Company (Lieut. J. V. Jacklin) and "D" Company (Lieut. B. A. Morrow) led the way, with "B" Company (Lieut. E. P. Leheup) in support. "C" Company (Captain W. G. Wenley, M.C.) was to mop-up and consolidate an orchard which was to be captured. At the outset there was machine gun fire from a trench in front, but this soon ceased and the resistance of a party of a dozen Germans was easily overcome. The orchard was held much more obstinately, but the leading waves were into them before they could manipulate the machine guns. "C" Company quickly mopped up this strong point, capturing a score of prisoners, five machine guns and an anti-tank gun. Richemont River was crossed with difficulty because of machine gun fire from a mill, but a platoon of "D" Company cleared the way by crossing the river and attacking the post in rear. "C" Company, at this stage, did not continue with the remainder of the Battalion, being left as garrison of the orchard and mill. When the leading companies reached the crest of the spur upon which stood Le Cateau Farm, the left company was held up by machine gun fire, but "A" Company, on the right, were able



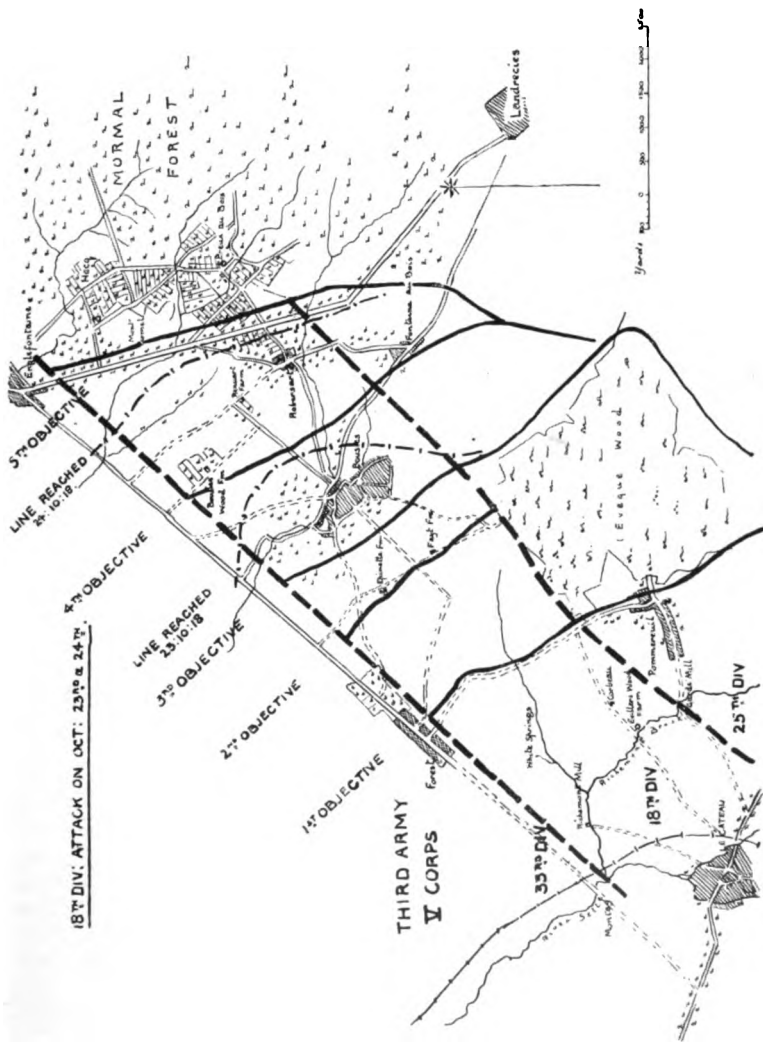
*LIEUT.-COL. R. FORBES, D.S.O., M.C., who
commanded 10th Bn. The Essex Regiment in the
last engagement of the war at Preux.*

to push on and enfilade the obstructing posts by Lewis gun fire. Upon this the garrisons immediately retired, but it was too late for safety and the majority became casualties. Two platoons from "B" Company arrived to strengthen the attack and the Essex went on again. This time "A" Company were held up, but they made skilful use of a fold in the ground and got within 150 yards of the enemy's post, which was rushed by a platoon under cover of Lewis gun and rifle fire, and the gun was captured. "D" Company, on the left, established two Lewis gun posts to command the valley. The line was within 300 yards of the final objective, when the left company became the object of venomous attention from the sunken road, the personnel of two of the platoons becoming casualties. On the right, however, the advance was continued and the right flank was made good at the cross roads, where touch was obtained with the Royal West Kents. An attempt to clear the road in a north-westerly direction was hindered by machine gun fire at 4.15 a.m. and it was not until 6.30 that it was sufficiently subdued for the Berkshires to pass through to make good the neighbourhood of Bousies, which was taken by the 55th Brigade. The artillery barrage throughout was excellent and was so precise that until within five hundred yards of the objective, where the enemy resistance stiffened, it was easily followed and was of great assistance to the attacking troops, as was also the machine gun barrage. At 3.30 p.m. the three forward companies were withdrawn and accommodated in Ervillers Wood Farm.

On the night of October 24th "A" Company went into the line at Bousies Wood Farm and "B" Company at Rennart Farm, "C" and "D" Companies being in support. The advance was resumed and on October 26th the Berkshires and Essex were put in again against Mont Carmel, a slight hill over the Landrecies-Englefontaine road. Three companies were in line, but in the enclosed country, full of hedges, orchards and sunken roads, the fighting was very confused. "B" and "C" Companies were able to reach their objectives, except for a strong point at the cross roads, but "A" Company, on the left, were unable to get forward, neither could the flank company of the Berkshires. A great gap was created, which was filled by Major R. Forbes, who brought up "D" Company, thus making the line secure. The right flank of the Essex was already in touch with the 55th Brigade. That night Major Forbes took over command of the Battalion. The Essex remained in the line until the night of October 29th-30th. The day before they went into billets at Bousies they sent out daylight patrols because of reports received that the enemy was retiring. These had not advanced more than three hundred yards, however, before they came under heavy fire, so that there was only a slight adjustment of the line in this sector. During the relief that night Battalion headquarters were shelled and several runners and members

of the orderly room staff were killed. R.S.M. Cousins was among the casualties, also Corporal Plume, who had served from the first fight and fell on the threshold of peace. The losses for the month of October included three officers and 25 other ranks killed and seven officers and 140 other ranks wounded. The dead officers were Captain Lindsay Hubert Carson, Lieut. Robert Haile, M.C., and 2nd Lieut. Joseph Albert Rowley.

It was expected that the 53rd Brigade would be called upon to attack again on November 1st, but the operation was postponed to November 4th. Meanwhile, the cheering news was received that Austria and Turkey had ceased fighting. On November 3rd preparations were completed for what proved to be the Battalion's last action in the war. Headquarters were at Petit Planty. "Immediately in front lay the open rising ground of Mont Carmel. Beyond this rise the country dipped again into a labyrinth of orchards and small fields, fringed with thick hedges running up to the northern outskirts of the village of Preux. Before the German occupation this picturesque little hamlet nestled closely up against the thickly-wooded forest. But the depredations of the invader had bitten large clearings into the forest edges, in order to supply the trenches with timber. And in the middle of one of these large clearings, situated just behind the village, there stood an imposing German sawmill. This clearing and sawmill formed the main goal of the Battalion. And to get there it had to pass through a maze of orchards and streams and hedges, and deploy on the cleared ground beyond." The initial task was assigned to the 54th Brigade and the Essex went in after their comrades had made good. The 10th Essex had the support of two tanks, which were loaded with Lewis guns and small arms ammunition. The companies moved off in the following order—"D," "C," "A" and "B," accompanied by two companies of the Berkshires, but when they had reached the road to an orchard in front of Preux they found the 54th Brigade having difficulty in making progress. Lieut.-Colonel Forbes went forward and, as a result of his reconnaissance, found a gap of two hundred yards between the enemy posts. By means of a farm gateway, he safely took the Battalion through the enemy line, and "B," "C" and "A" Companies, with the Berkshires, deployed for the advance upon Preux. As the southern portion of the village was still in German custody, the Essex and the Berkshires suffered somewhat from machine gun fire, particularly from the northern edge of Lail de la Carnere du Vivier. This trouble was answered by machine guns and "D" Company were pushed in on the extreme left to work with the right flank of the Berkshires. The sawmills were soon cleared and the machine guns then moved forward with the leading lines and covered the advance. A hard contest ensued between the Wood and the sawmills, but the village had been secured at 2.30 p.m., the Northamptonshires having assisted by seizing the eastern edge.





"Goodby-ee!" Our last sight of the German Army.



THE GATEWAY TO PREUX.

Through this gateway the Battalion made its way between enemy posts on either side and, forming up behind the German lines, advanced victoriously to the batteries beyond.

It is said that the last sight which the Essex had of the enemy was a solitary unarmed German running as hard as he could down one of the long forest rides in full cry for the Fatherland! In order to maintain touch with the 50th Division, the Battalion went to Route de Pont Routier, where three companies finally held the line, with the fourth company in close support. They had the 1st K.O.Y.L.I. on the right and their old comrades of the Berkshires on the left. At 8.30 p.m. the 55th Brigade passed through and at 8.45 that night it was notified that as the enemy opposition had slackened, the line held by the 53rd Brigade would be the resistance line. Battalion headquarters were in Preux. The casualties were one officer killed (2nd Lieut. R. E. Burke) and one wounded; four other ranks killed and 20 wounded.

On November 6th the 18th Division was taken out of the line and the 10th Essex went to Le Cateau, where, at 9.30 a.m. on November 11th, "news was received that an armistice had been arranged with the enemy." "When the last gun was fired the 10th Essex were on parade drilling with an ingrained habit as if to prepare for the next war (save the mark!) and the culminating moment of the years of effort scarcely disturbed the routine of the day. It was not that the soldier man was lacking in imagination. But blatant demonstration seemed out of place amidst the scenes of sacrifice and service." The Battalion marched to Premont on November 12th, where the chief occupation was salvage and preparation for a divisional review. At the end of the month the effective strength was 43 officers and 580 other ranks, of whom 29 officers and 516 other ranks were serving with the unit.

AFTER THE ARMISTICE.

Major-General Lee reviewed the Division east of Elincourt on December 2nd and next day another move was made, this time to the Beaurevoir area. Battalion headquarters and "A" Company were billeted at Geneve, "B" Company at Ponchaux, "C" Company on the eastern outskirts of Beaurevoir and "D" Company in the vicinity. There salvaging was varied by classes, and instruction was given in many subjects, in which the men showed much keenness. King George V passed through Serain on December 4th, and the Battalion was there to salute him. Lectures were given throughout December in what was described as Essex New Hall. Christmas Day was celebrated with much carefree festivity. When fateful 1918 closed the Battalion had a strength of 43 officers and 613 other ranks. Nine officers and 79 other ranks were detached, but there were also attachments of two officers and 52 other ranks, so that the ration strength was 36 officers and 586 other ranks. As January, 1919, moved slowly on its way, interest turned more and more to demobilization, for the first men left for England and civil life.

Sport aroused keen interest, as it always does, whether in war or peace, and the Battalion, represented by Thompson, Byerley, Wilkinson, Howard and Banks, had the satisfaction of winning the Brigade Cross Country Cup. In February the Battalion was transferred to Clary, near to Cambrai. Through its main street the Essex marched along to the old regimental tune :—

“The Essex boys they do love duff,

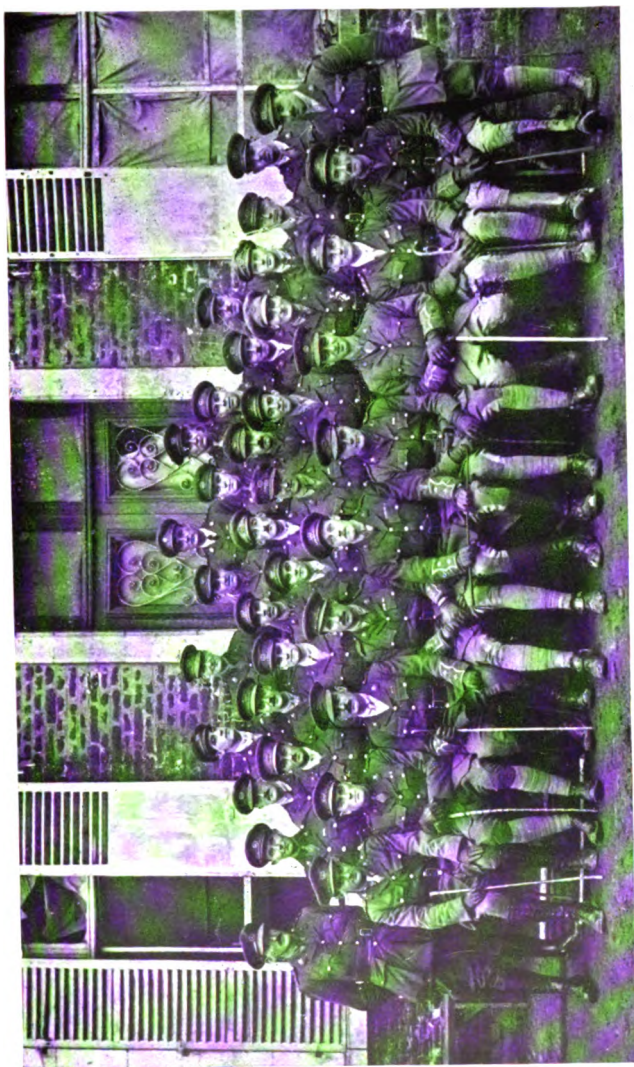
“They do love duff, they do love duff,

“But the poor little beggars can’t get enough,

“They can’t get enough ; they can’t get enough.”

So the days passed by and then a large detachment left to join the 15th Essex at Calais, which took away the substance of the 10th Essex ; it was no longer a Battalion. On that occasion a special order of the day by Lieut.-Colonel T. M. Banks, D.S.O., M.C., was issued, which ran : “On the occasion of the departure of the draft for the Army of Occupation and the reduction of the 10th Battalion The Essex Regiment to cadre strength, the Commanding Officer wishes to thank all ranks for the magnificent way in which one and all have steadily maintained the reputation of British arms and have added lustre to the proud record of the Regiment. Whether fighting or training and throughout the trying waiting period after the Armistice, the record of the Battalion has been unsullied and its gallantry and devotion to duty of a markedly high standard. Its fighting record is long and illustrious and includes most of the famous battles in France since 1916, in which the 10th Essex have played a conspicuously successful part. The spirit of comradeship between all ranks has been particularly fine and durable throughout. Now, as the Battalion breaks up, many are continuing to serve their country with other units, while some return to civil life. In bidding them farewell and good-luck, the Commanding Officer is confident that, wherever the old members of the Battalion may be, the high record that they have helped to create will serve as an inspiration and will keep their heads high.”

Early in June the cadre left for England by way of Havre and Southampton, and disbandment was finally accomplished at Fovant on Salisbury Plain. The colours were sent to the depot at Warley, where they now hang in the Essex Regiment Chapel.



OFFICERS' GROUP, GENEVE, XMAS 1918.

First Row : Lieuts. Graham, Gage, 2nd Lieut. Potter, Rev. D. Randall, 2nd Lieut. Wilkinson, Capt. Knopp, 2nd Lieut. Holmes,
2nd Lieut. Southcott.
Middle Row : Capt. Ord, 2nd Lieut. Moore, Capt. Nunn, 2nd Lieuts. Lord, Fog, Taylor, Lieut. Moore, 2nd Lieuts. Bostock, Bragg,
Lieuts. Leitch, Morris, Capt. Thompson, 2nd Lieuts. Faulkner, Enoch, Evans, Lieut. Heukley, 2nd Lieut. Denham.
Sitting : Lieuts. Stitt, Nicol, Jordan, Capt. Skeat, Lieut. Col. Banks, Carls, Hardaker, Bland, Wenlev, Byerley.

11th Bn. The Essex Regiment

FOREWORD.

(By BRIGADIER-GENERAL F. G. SPRING, C.B., C.M.G.,
D.S.O.)

THIS History of the 11th Battalion The Essex Regiment places on record the action of gallant men who fought in France during the Great War to preserve our Empire. Many gave their lives without thought of self, and of those who are still with us many, alas, are maimed for life.

Although an outsider belonging to another Regiment, I had the honour to be given command of this Battalion for 14½ months, and no Commanding Officer has ever been better served by all ranks of his Battalion. Whatever I asked of them, whether to carry out a raid or to dig out a trench in the mud, rain and dark, and under fire, or, to come to a more congenial task, to (say) stage a concert—whatever it was, it was always done promptly, efficiently and cheerfully. Off duty and often on duty, when we were not being what is known as very “Regimental,” they would greet me with a smile and, in the mud of the Somme or the chalk of Loos, those smiles were a tonic to me and one I valued greatly.

On behalf of all those who served in this Battalion, I give our thanks to Mr. J. W. Burrows, who has spent so much time and devoted so much labour to editing this History. May all in the County of Essex, from the highest to the lowest, and particularly those who have grown up since the Great War, read this and other histories of their County Units and, by reading, know what very gallant men upheld the honour of Essex during those crucial years of 1915-18.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "F. G. Spring". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that serves as a separator.

January 28th, 1935.

11th Battalion The Essex Regiment

FORMATION AND TRAINING.

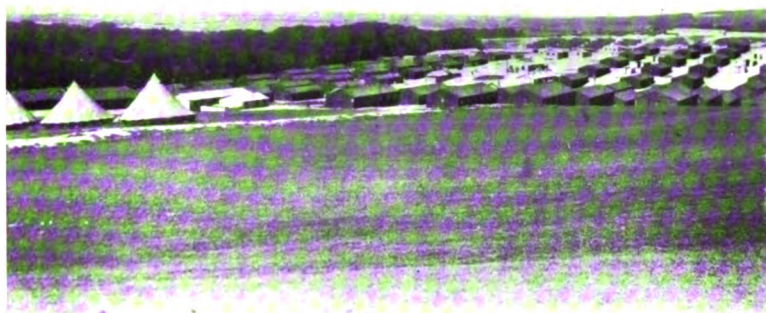
THE 11th Battalion The Essex Regiment was the third in succession of the units to be raised specially for service in the war. It was recruited from the third series of hundred thousand men who responded to Lord Kitchener's appeal and who were known as K8. The Battalion was formally constituted at Shoreham during the second week of September, 1914, and formed part of the 24th Division (Major-General Sir J. G. Ramsay, K.C.B.). The 71st Brigade (Brigadier-General M. T. Shewin) had a considerable East Anglian flavour, being composed, in addition to the 11th Essex, of the 9th Norfolk, 9th Suffolk and 8th Bedfordshire. The other brigades were more representative of suburban London, for the 72nd Brigade (Brigadier-General B. R. Mitford) had the 8th Queen's, 8th Buffs, 9th East Surrey and 8th Royal West Kent, whilst the 73rd Brigade (Brigadier-General W. A. Oswald) included the 12th Royal Fusiliers, 9th Royal Sussex, 7th Northants and 13th Middlesex.

The Division encountered many difficulties in training, not the least of which arose from the fact that no battalion had more than one retired Regular or ex-Regular officer except the C.O., and in all cases, except one, he was on the retired list, either Regular or Militia. All the brigadiers were retired officers, two of them from the Indian Army. As a consequence, most of the officers as well as men had to be instructed in their duties and although all were zealous, the progress was not as rapid as in the case of earlier formations, which had a larger percentage of experienced officers. Divisional training was, therefore, not as far advanced as was essential when orders came for France and the lack of it was soon felt when the Division was put in at the height of the Battle of Loos. The 71st Brigade was wholly raised at Shoreham, but by the end of May, 1915, the other brigades had been concentrated near East Shoreham and Patcham and the Division was moved on to Aldershot at the end of July for final preparation for active service. Arms were late in arriving. The Division was not completely equipped with rifles until May and the artillery did not arrive until the Division had reached Aldershot. The Official Historian wrote: There was very little combined training, and that mostly in trench

warfare. The time at Aldershot was taken up mainly with unit training and musketry. The artillery had their practice on Salisbury Plain. In general, the two divisions (21st and 24th) were thought to be better trained than they really were and were sent into action after being three weeks in France in back areas, without any period of initiation."

AT SHOREHAM.

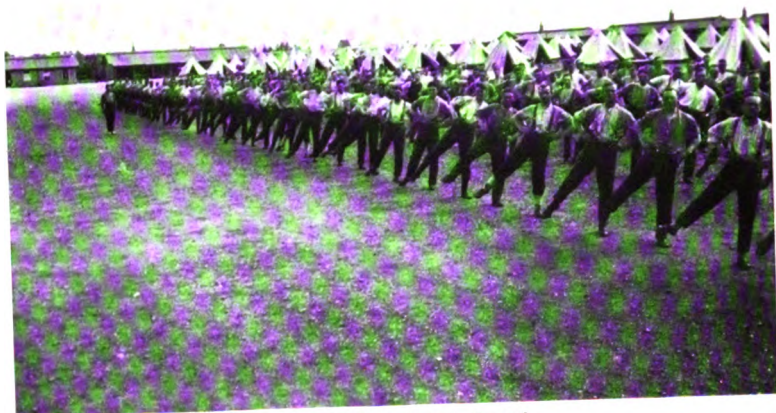
The first member of the 11th Essex to take up duty at Shoreham (September 4th) was the Adjutant, Captain H. H. Heppell, who had been attached from the 2nd Essex. He was followed during the next few days by upwards of a thousand recruits, the majority from rural Essex, who had to be temporarily accommodated in churches, cinemas, halls and similar buildings. Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Radclyffe, D.S.O., arrived on September 7th and took over command. He had been gazetted to the Rifle Brigade from the Militia in 1885 and retired in 1918 after spending the last four years of service as commanding officer of the 4th Battalion. His active service was considerable, including the Burmese Expedition and the South African War. The D.S.O. was awarded to him in the course of the latter campaign for his gallant conduct at an engagement at Oceanic Mine. Major H. B. Harris, who served under him in the 11th Essex as a company commander, recalls that he knew his work and realized what a difficult task it would be to mould a job lot of officers and men into a first-class fighting body in the shortest possible time. He succeeded in doing it, nevertheless. The Colonel was specially keen on musketry. "When I joined him I told him I had been a private in the Inns of Court Rifle Volunteers during the Boer War. He sent for me next day and told me I was to be musketry instructor. I said I knew nothing about it, but he replied, 'Get a Musketry Regulations and start teaching in two days.' I asked where I could get the Regulations and he said, 'Don't ask questions. Do what you are told.' He secured an excellent musketry sergeant and as Colonel Radclyffe was always watching the work, we won the Divisional Miniature Shooting Competition. Shoreham was a sea of mud and one day the C.O. said to me, 'This mud is very ugly. Sow some flower seeds, so that it will look better in the Spring.' That evening I went to Brighton and bought some flower seeds, scattering them about in the wind in the dark when I came back. Next morning he called me and asked, 'What seeds have you sown in the mud?' I had learnt my lesson and I promptly told him what he wanted to know. We were all volunteers, many over military age, and trying our very best to learn to keep up with the quick younger men. Did the Colonel have consideration or pity for such? No, he drove us one and all alike. At first he seemed to me drastic in his punishments on men who had given up everything at the call of duty, but he was right every time and



Shoreham Camp.



11th Essex Miniature Range at Shoreham.



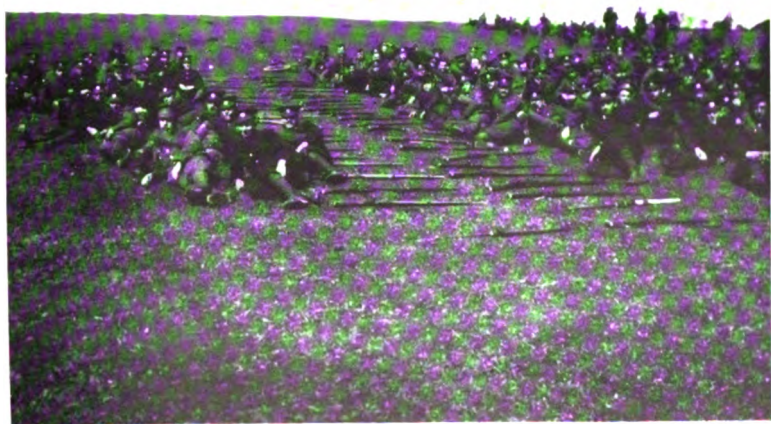
Physical Drill on Parade Ground.



Bomb Throwing.



Outpost on Southwick Hill entrenched with grubber (No. 13 Platoon).



A rest near The Dyke, Brighton.



N.C.O.'s of No. 13 Platoon.



No. 14 Platoon.

the Battalion owes him a great debt for setting a standard of efficiency and smartness which I believe was never lost. If a mistake was made ignorance was the worst plea that could be put up. He once told me off for some innocent mistake I made with such strength of language that I felt at the time I could never speak to him again. Yet I found him a few days afterwards defending me with equal violence to the Brigade over a similar offence. He was no favourite with the Staff. If an order came concerning the internal management of the Battalion with which he did not agree, he disregarded it without worrying about the consequences. Another disagreeable job he did which many men would have shrunk from. When we were placed under orders for France he weeded out several officers whom he did not consider totally satisfactory. They were, too, senior officers, with whom he had been in close contact, but that fact did not deter him from doing his duty."

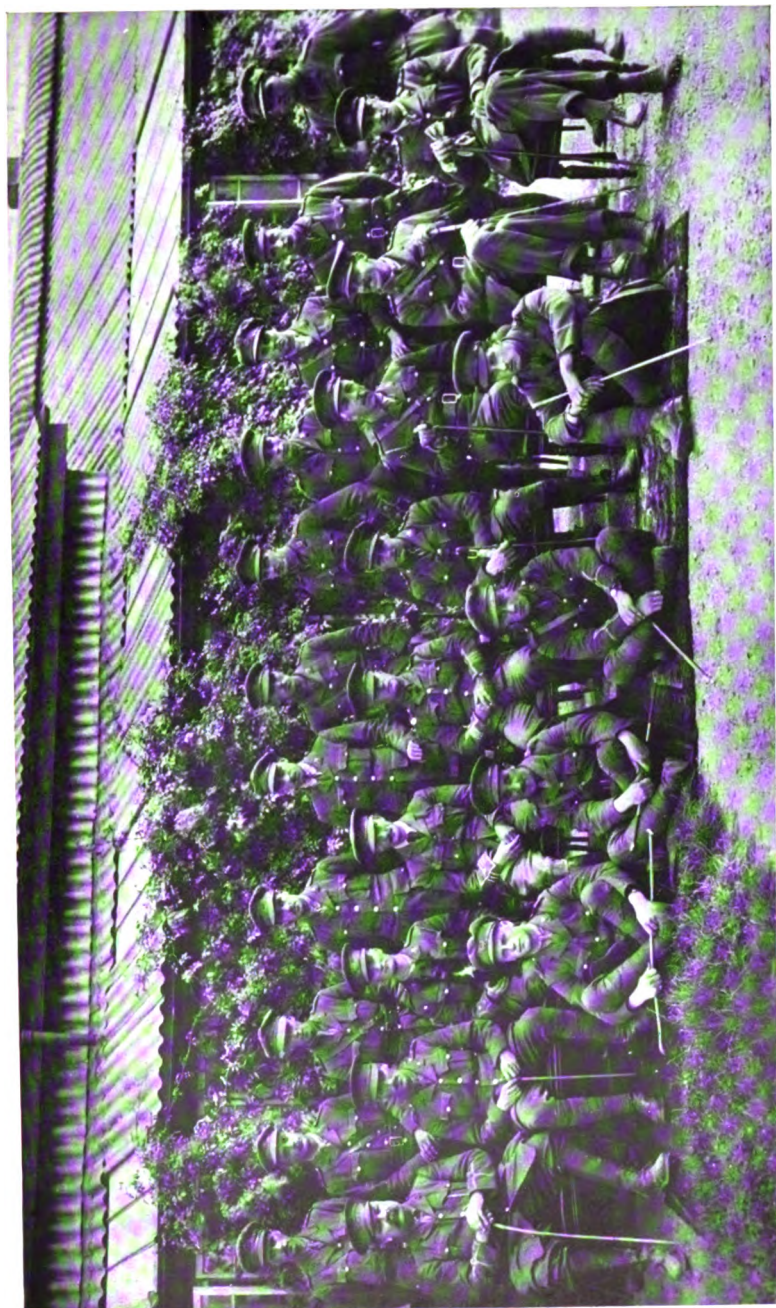
The Battalion was transferred, in due course, to tents on Shoreham Golf Course. The weather became very wet and huts would have to be built. Their erection was slow, however, and for a time the Division was billeted in Brighton. There the Battalion stayed until February, 1915, when it returned to the huts at Shoreham. The old pattern long rifles were issued for drill purposes at the end of November, 1914. There was a miniature range at Shoreham and the adapted Service rifle, with Morris tube, was used for musketry instruction. Leather equipment was received in the early summer, when the Essex went to Redhill and stayed for a fortnight. The march back to Shoreham took two days. The musketry course was fired at Pirbright ranges in July, 1915, at which time the Battalion was at Blackdown, having marched there in three days, during which it stayed a night each at Horsham and Guildford.

ARRIVAL IN FRANCE.

Whilst practising trench warfare on Chobham Common, on August 21st, 1915, the Battalion was notified that it would probably be ordered to move to France within a week, and leave, which had been accorded to 15 per cent. of the personnel for four clear days at a time, was immediately curtailed to 48 hours. Next day Captain V. M. Lunnion was sent to France by divisional instructions, though the Battalion continued to be employed in trench digging and trench fighting. On August 28th, however, the advance party, under Major Matthews, consisting of three officers and 108 men, with transport and horses, left in the evening for Southampton and on August 30th the Battalion—26 officers and 839 other ranks—entrained at Frimley Station in two parties for Folkestone. It landed at Boulogne and immediately moved to Ostrohave rest camp, situate on a hill overlooking the town, which was reached about 2 a.m. on the night of August 30th-31st.

On September 1st the Battalion entrained at the Central Station, Boulogne, for Montreuil-sur-Mer, from whence it marched four kilometres to two villages, Estrée and Estrelles, where billets were obtained. Battalion headquarters were at an estaminet in Estrée adjacent to the bridge which spanned the small stream separating the two villages. For three weeks training was resumed, particularly by brigade and by division. The most extensive operation was that on September 17th, when the 71st Brigade marched, on a dark and foggy night, by way of Aix-en-Issart and St. Denoeux, to Boubers, which was reached just before dawn. There the division practised a scheme of attack on the St. Omer road. The 11th Essex were in support of the 9th Norfolk, who were launched against the high ground north of Sempy. The Battalion arrived back in billets at 12.30 p.m. on September 18th. Two days later the Essex advanced in two waves under cover of machine gun fire. The previous lack of opportunity for divisional training was severely felt. For instance, the utmost difficulty was experienced in getting orders passed along, but there was no time to remedy the defects. The men were as hard as nails, as tough as constant route marching could make them, but they had need of all their strength in the night marches which were to take them to Bethune, near the front line. Battle ammunition was served out before the start and that, in addition to the pack, was more than a man could carry, without taxing him to the uttermost. "On top of this," an officer recalls, "when we had started our first night march a thousand blankets were dumped from lorries by the side of the road. Colonel Radclyffe never hesitated, however. 'Let them stay there,' said he, and stay there, they did."

The march towards the front line began at 4.30 p.m. on September 21st and extended to 21 miles. A halt was made for tea at 6 p.m., after which the Battalion went on with only the usual ten minutes' halt every hour till four the following morning. Several men of another battalion fell out, but very few of the Essex became casualties, though there was a certain amount of straggling and grousing, caused mainly by the involuntary checks of the transport in front, which made progress irritatingly slow. The destination was a village between Matringhem and Senlis, but the billeting party could not be found, so after a ration of hot tea served out by the cooks, the Battalion bivouacked in a field. The march was resumed at 6 p.m. next day and was by way of Beaumetz, Boury and Molinghem. The last-named was rumoured to be the destination, but it proved not to be the case and the extra two miles that had to be covered were a great trial to the men. Half of them fell out, but straggled in during the next morning. Those who stuck it reached Ham-en-Artois, a small village some five miles south-east of Aire, at 3.30 a.m. on September 23rd. The billets were comfortable, but the Battalion did not have the hoped-for night's rest. At



OFFICERS OF 11th ESSEX AT DATE OF EMBARKATION FOR FRANCE.

Back Row : Capt. G. B. Davies, Lieut. A. K. Fison, 2nd Lieut. A. C. Betells, 2nd Lieut. F. S. Long, 2nd Lieut. R. M. L. Clifford, Lieut. M. A. Murray, Lieut. Coleman, R.A.M.C., Lieut. P. F. Dule, 2nd Lieut. J. D. Ferguson, Lieut. D. C. Hasler, 2nd Lieut. Nelthorpe.

Middle Row : Lieut. Cann (Qmtr.), Capt. J. H. Gulliland, Lieut. E. Brennan, Maj. J. H. Davies, Lieut.-Col. C. E. Radclyffe, D.S.O., Capt. & Adj. H. M. Heppel, Maj. E. Matthews, Capt. H. B. Harris, Capt. J. D. Read.

Front Row : Lieut. J. Hammond, 2nd Lieut. S. P. Roberts, 2nd Lieut. Middleton, 2nd Lieut. S. C. Scott.

7.30 p.m. the Essex started again in a shower of rain and after marching three miles occupied a field at Carmet Brassart. Unofficial billets were obtained, however, and so a more comfortable night was passed than had been anticipated. During the next afternoon official information as to the projected operation at Loos was circulated for the first time and maps of the Lens area were issued to officers. The mutter of the guns was incessant and German aeroplanes, flying high overhead, were constantly fired at. Shortly after 7 p.m. on September 24th the Battalion resumed its march to Bethune. Side roads were used except by the transport, and the destination was reached at 2 a.m. on September 25th. The 11th Essex had arrived at "The Front."

"The worst part of the march," wrote Captain Harris, "was the halts, often half an hour or more waiting for a move, and perhaps going on for a few minutes. Another halt would then ensue. The men's packs proved less easy to carry when standing. Such was the discipline of the 11th Essex, however, that I believe we lost only one man permanently during that march. He was in 'A' Company. The M.O. said his heart had given out and thought he was finished. He was carried to a cottage on the road and I asked the peasant's wife if she had sons in the war. 'Yes,' she said. I told her that one had come back with a bad heart and handed over my man. They treated him as they would have done their own son and when he was better they put him on a lorry and he hid in the French lines until he heard where we were, when he rejoined. He was, of course, sent to hospital and did not rejoin, but it was a magnificent example of keenness and pluck."

BATTLE OF LOOS.

The employment of the 24th Division and its companion Division, the 21st, in the Battle of Loos gave rise to much subsequent discussion, and the author of Volume IV of the Official History of the War devotes no fewer than twenty-four pages to a narration of the circumstances under which the Divisions were brought into action. The XI Corps (Lieut.-General R. C. B. Haking, C.B.), newly formed, was composed of the Guards Division, which had been recently constituted, and the 21st and 24th Divisions. With the Cavalry Corps it was the general reserve for the battle, under the direct orders of the Commander-in-Chief. It assembled in the area west of St. Omer and, by night marches, was concentrated around Lillers by the night of September 22nd-23rd, sixteen miles behind the main battle front. General Haig, commanding the First Army, was informed that the troops available for the operation would be his own divisions, plus the Cavalry Corps and two other divisions in general reserve. He accordingly designed to employ the whole of his two Corps upon the assault, relying upon the troops from general reserve to supply the momentum to carry on the advance when the offensive had been launched. Discussion ensued between Haig and his Commander-in-Chief as to whether the two divisions, posted at Lillers, were close enough up to take advantage of any success achieved by the attacking divisions. Sir John French was disinclined to relinquish direct control of the general reserve, but promised that the 21st and 24th Divisions would be assembled on the lines Noeux les Mines-Beuvry, 4,000 yards behind Vermelles, at daylight on September 25th. Haig understood from this notification that the divisions had been placed under his direct orders, the Commander-in-Chief being content with the Guards Division and the Cavalry Corps as general reserve. "Such, however, was not the case," wrote the Official War Historian. "Sir John French had agreed to move the 21st and 24th Divisions nearer the battle front in order to be able to take advantage of any local advance, but he still intended to keep the entire XI Corps intact in his own hands until the situation had developed." Thus it was that the XI Corps started at 7 p.m. on September 24th for the final march to the front, the 21st Division to Noeux les Mines and the 24th to Beuvry. Both divisions were, for the most part, traversing side roads. The slow movement of the troops, unused to active service conditions, upon narrow roads, already congested with much traffic, caused intense fatigue.

This, with the rain, lack of sleep and of proper food, ill-fitted them for the strenuous task upon which they were to be employed. "The Gonnehem-Chocques road, marked as a 'down' road, but used by the 24th Division as 'up,' was only three or four feet wider than a column of fours, with a deep ditch on each side. Units had to get into file to permit the passage of vehicles, and at every cross road there were blocks caused by cross traffic. It was like trying to push the Lord Mayor's procession through the streets of London without clearing the route and holding up the traffic. There were also constant stoppages at the numerous level crossings. . . . A ridiculous incident occurred on the outskirts of Bethune, where a military policeman stopped the 72nd Brigade because the brigade commander had no pass to enter the area. Cut into thus by cross traffic of all kinds, and not having a clear passage, the columns after a time naturally presented a very ragged appearance. At least two portions of the broken columns lost their way, took wrong turnings and had to be brought back, against the traffic, to rejoin." The last of the battalions was not in position until 6 a.m. on September 25th, when rest was obtained by lying down in adjoining fields. Had the divisions been properly co-ordinated to the work of Haig's force, they should at this time have been moving forward to the support of the attack, but it was not until 9.30 a.m. that the 21st and 24th Divisions were ordered into the British front line trenches. The leading brigades started the march at 11.15 a.m., the 62nd Brigade of the 21st Division being detached to support the 15th Division at Loos and Hill 70 and the 78rd Brigade of the 24th Division to assist the 9th Division with the intention of continuing the offensive in and beyond Haisnes. Haig was acting upon the information to hand concerning the position in front, though it subsequently proved to be too optimistic. It was believed that the German line had been broken at Cité St. Elie and Hulluch and that a break through at Haisnes and Cité St. Auguste was imminent. Although substantial success had been achieved, it was not as complete as the reports suggested, and, moreover, heavy losses had been suffered. The misconception was not confined to British headquarters, for the French were also optimistic and in one case reported to the XI Corps that a German divisional headquarters was packing up and moving to the rear, which was later proved incorrect. In these circumstances, at 2.35 p.m., General Haking was ordered to push forward the 21st and 24th Divisions between Hulluch and Cité St. Auguste and occupy the high ground between Harne and Pont à Vendin, both inclusive, and secure the passages of the Haute Deule Canal at those places. This movement would relieve the 3rd Cavalry Division, who would advance on Carvin. The infantry of the two divisions (less the 62nd and 78rd Brigades, which had been detached as mentioned above) were ordered forward, the 21st

on a thousand yards frontage between Fosse 7 on the Bethune-Lens road and the Vermelles-Loos track, and the 24th upon a similar frontage between the Vermelles-Loos track and the Vermelles-Hulluch road, with the centre about Le Rutoire Farm. The 72nd Brigade led the latter, with the 71st Brigade in support. The high ground guarding the Haute Deule Canal was to be seized, with the crossings at Loison sous Lens, Harnes and Pont à Vendin as the final objectives. The march of the divisions to the assembly positions about Mazingarbe and Noyelles, behind Vermelles, had been slow. The 72nd Brigade, from Bethune, did not arrive at the Bully stream, east of Noyelles (one mile north of Mazingarbe), until a few minutes before 8 p.m., closely followed by the 71st Brigade, whose column, however, extended for two miles, back to Sailly-Labourse. The orders to advance were not received by the brigades until after 5 p.m. and an hour later some of the battalions were still quite a distance from their line of deployment. In these circumstances fresh instructions were issued (6.10 p.m.), which limited the objective of the leading brigades of the two divisions to the Hulluch-Lens road, with the possibility of a further advance if the light of the moon was sufficiently favourable. The right of the 72nd Brigade (24th Division) and left of the 63rd Brigade (21st Division) were directed on the Hulluch-Loos and Lens-La Bassée cross-roads, in an endeavour to link up the IV Corps on the right and I Corps on the left, with orders to the brigadiers to consult at the junction of Loos-Haisnes road and Lone Tree-Hulluch road at 1 a.m. that night, regarding the advisability of proceeding farther. If they decided to go on, their objective was to include reconnaissance of the canal bridges at Pont à Vendin, which, if unoccupied, were to be secured by a strong advanced guard. The 21st Division marched in heavy rain to its jumping-off position by way of Bethune-Lens road, whilst the 24th Division crossed the railway near Vermelles and commenced to form up about 8.30 p.m., the 72nd Brigade about Le Rutoire Farm and the 71st Brigade to the left rear. The divisional artillery, which had been detached, was ordered to be in action at daylight on September 26th, but it was some time later than that before it arrived. Upon a compass bearing of 112° , the brigades of the 24th went across the grassland to the Lens-La Bassée road three miles away. "At times there was fair visibility, for the enemy bombardment of Loos had turned the village into a furnace of flame, with 'Tower Bridge' silhouetted in black outline against the ruddy glow, and the sky was lightened by other burning villages, shellfire and Very lights. From time to time would come a wave of mist, when all was hidden." Although the way was difficult over the now derelict British and German first line trenches, the brigadiers met at 1.10 a.m. at the place appointed in improving weather conditions, for the rain had stopped and the moon was breaking through. The advance was ordered to continue, with

the 8th Royal West Kents directed against Hulluch. The last-named had moved off and the other three battalions of the brigade were preparing to go forward, when the 72nd Brigade was ordered to halt west of the Lens-La Bassée road, keeping in touch with the 3rd Brigade on the left and the 68rd Brigade on the right. The movement against Hulluch was cancelled and the other battalions of the brigade were formed up on a front of nine hundred yards to the west of the Lens-La Bassée road. Just before dawn they were withdrawn to the support trenches of the German original front line defence system. The 71st Brigade, meanwhile, had reached the British original first line, with its centre opposite Lone Tree, and there it halted for the night. Instructions were there received for the 9th Norfolks and later the 8th Bedfordshires to retake the Quarries. These battalions were accordingly detached, leaving only two battalions with the 71st Brigade. The Bedfords could not get touch with the Norfolks and they returned during the morning of the 26th. The 68rd Brigade (21st Division) had proceeded with its advance, although the brigadier knew that the companion brigade was not moving forward. It reached the Lens-La Bassée road at and north of the Chalk Pit, and there relieved the remnants of the 2nd Brigade. "The four brigades of the 21st and 24th Divisions and the field companies, R.E., with them had thus spent the night in an exhausting march across country, whereas the G.O.C. First Army believed that the bulk of both of them, having only two miles to advance, were getting a fair night's rest on the Lens-La Bassée road prior to continuing the offensive in the morning." Next day a general advance of the divisions was ordered at 11 a.m., with the object of taking the German second position lying between Bois Hugo and Hulluch, but before it commenced the Germans counter-attacked on the front of the 21st Division and inflicted serious losses. The 72nd Brigade (24th Division), reinforced by the two remaining battalions of the 71st Brigade (9th Suffolks and 11th Essex), had gone steadily forward with the preparations for the renewed offensive, this time against the German second position between Stützpunkt IV (exclusive) and Puits 13 bis (Stützpunkt III), which was to be undertaken by the 72nd Brigade, with the Essex and Suffolk in reserve. The 2nd Welch, of the 1st Division, also were simultaneously sent against Hulluch. The advance was splendidly carried out and assisted to steady the much-tried 68rd Brigade (of the 21st Division). The 1st Division, however, failed to capture Hulluch and the task set the 21st Division asked of the men, tired, hungry and shaken by the German counter-attack, more than human endurance could stand. Ere nightfall several of the units were back near the original front line trenches. The 72nd Brigade of the 24th Division, with the two battalions of the 71st Brigade, was very steady, but before it reached the Lens-La Bassee road the 9th East Surreys drew

away to the right and came under a devastating fire from Bois Hugo. They came to a standstill in the area of the 21st Division. The 8th Royal West Kent (on the left), with half of the 2nd Welch, went straight on, passing by the southern front of Hulluch and coming under enfilade fire from both flanks as they crossed the Lens-La Basse road. "On a frontage of fifteen hundred yards between Bois Hugo and Puits 18 bis, which had been allotted to two divisions, two and a half battalions were attacking with a gap of seven hundred yards in their line. The 8th Buffs and 8th Queen's were put in to fill the gap. The 11th Essex were sent to support the battalions on the left, whilst the Suffolks afforded similar aid in the centre. This had the effect of giving renewed impetus to the attack, but as the Essex pushed on, so they were being more and more bitterly assailed by the fire of all arms—they were "pressing into the big pocket between the two flanks of the German defence." The troops reached the top of a rise within three hundred yards of the curtain of the great bastioned front, the German second position, which lay back some thousand yards east of the Lens road along the eastern slope of the Cité ridge. It was a single trench, but with stout barbed wire entanglements, 4ft. high and 15ft. to 20ft. broad, and possessing at the ends and in the centre strong works known as Stützpunkt III, IV and V. From this formidable series of works the Germans could be seen firing from the parapet. Notwithstanding terrific losses, the Kents, Surreys and Welch, of the 72nd Brigade, advanced unwaveringly until they were stopped at 1 p.m. within fifty yards of the objective, and even then small parties crawled up to the entanglement in an endeavour to find gaps therein. On the left half of the Welch got in between Puits 18 bis and Hulluch, but the success could not be exploited because the 1st Division had been repulsed. The closing scene is quoted in full from the Official History, because it does justice to the gallant men of the 72nd and 71st Brigades and, incidentally, to the 11th Essex: "The 9th Suffolk and 11th Essex, of the 71st Brigade, having been ordered forward at 11.25 a.m. (September 26th) were now advancing across the Lens-La Basse road to reinforce the 72nd Brigade. They also immediately came under very heavy fire from Hulluch and its vicinity, and about a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards beyond the road the lines of the Suffolks were brought to a stop. Part of the Essex on the left turned towards Hulluch and made a gallant effort to reach the enemy and check his fire, eventually finding refuge in a hollow road south-west of the village. The remainder of the Essex, regardless of fire, moved straight ahead in the general direction of Stützpunkt IV, and some of them reached the wire entanglement and mingled with the Queen's. A deadlock had now been reached. By a disciplined effort the 8th Royal West Kent, 8th Buffs, 8th Queen's and 11th Essex, suffering severe casualties but pushing on without firing a shot, had arrived



at the wire in front of their objective, the German second position. In the long grass near it they were hidden from the fire that had caused their losses. The Germans were now invisible and only fired at men who tried to break down the wire or otherwise made themselves conspicuous. The chances of getting through the wire into the trench were hopeless. On the right the survivors could see the 21st Division and 9th East Surrey slowly falling back; on their left rear Hulluch was still in possession of the enemy. There were no signs of reserves coming up. Some officers were for sticking it out, unwilling to give up the ground gained; others felt that if they remained they could not escape being taken prisoner and that they had done all that could be reasonably expected. Lieut.-Colonels Remer, of the Buffs, Fairtlough, of the Queen's, Radclyffe, of the Essex, had been killed; Vansittart, of the Royal West Kent, and Brettell, of the Suffolk, wounded, and many other officers had fallen. Somebody cried, 'Retire!' and, leaving the 8th Buffs and others, who remained and were killed or captured, most of the survivors, some ten to fifteen minutes after the retirement of the 21st Division had been observed, by common accord began to fall back steadily, without panic and at an even pace, towards the Lens road. Halfway up the slope—that is, about seven hundred yards from the road—the flank nearest Hulluch was mown down by machine gun fire and then the line broke up into groups, some men making for the hollow road south-west of Hulluch. Here they were collected, and passed on to the trench Alley 4, from which the leading lines of the 72nd Brigade had attacked such a short time before. Of the 24th Division there was no force left in hand except the Pioneer Battalion, the 12th Sherwood Foresters, who were sent up to Lone Tree Ridge and did good service in stemming the tide of stragglers and organizing scattered parties. The 2nd Welch, with two companies in the German flanking trench east of Hulluch and two opposite the west of the village, saw the general retirement, and, finding both these flanks in the air, also withdrew." That afternoon the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the Guards Division took over from the two divisions.

The observer of the 26th Regiment of the German Army wrote: "The battalion staff was on the left flank, south of Stützpunkt IV, whence we had a wonderful view. The English attacked in whole hosts and with great dash. Our men fired standing up as fast as they could pull the triggers. No Englishman got through the wire entanglement, and the ground in front was covered with bodies." Major-General J. E. Capper, who succeeded General Ramsay in command of the 24th Division shortly after the battle, wrote: "The division had undertaken a task under conditions in which the best trained troops in the British or any other army would have found it difficult to succeed." The losses of the two divisions were exceedingly heavy, embracing

4,051 of all ranks for the 21st Division and 4,178 for the 24th.

In commenting at length upon the failure of the two divisions the Official Historian wrote: "Many legends have grown up; in particular, that thrust into action, worn out by continuous night marching and unfed, they disgraced themselves and the New Army by retiring before the enemy." After discussing points arising upon the march up to the assembly positions and the difficulties encountered, he comes to the conclusion that it was as "old campaigners" that the divisions failed and "this, seeing how few experienced men they contained, can be no reproach to them. . . . They also failed because the direction of large bodies of troops is an art which cannot be acquired in a year of hard training. Rank and file, if of good will, can be taught the elements of their duties—to march, shoot and obey—in a few months. Soldiers may thus be created in a short time, but not officers; still less divisions, which, composed of all arms, require not only that individuals and units should be fully trained, but also a knowledge of staff work and team work which takes much experience and long practice to acquire." The writer is emphatic in his testimony of the conduct of officers and men, for he states: "In bravery the twelve out of the twenty-six battalions of the two divisions, by which alone the attack on the 26th was made, were certainly not lacking. Without sufficient artillery support, they went forward under terrific fire into a re-entrant held on three sides by the enemy, their flanks completely open owing to the failure in very difficult circumstances of the 15th and 1st Divisions to capture Hill 70 and Hulluch. Gravely handicapped by having no previous initiation into the nature of war and by being kept too far back in general reserve, they were, as it turned out, asked to do a nearly impossible task. In spite of this and in spite of heavy losses the battalions of the 72nd and 71st Brigades, who had the plain task of going straight forward, actually reached the wire of the German second position, and had they not found it both formidable and intact, they would undoubtedly have entered the position. No one has ever cast aspersions on the gallantry of the regiments which assaulted the great breach at Badajoz without success. As it was, many men remained lying in front of the wire until the enemy captured them by approaching from the flank and rear. The spirit of the men rallied by Brig.-General Mitford in Alley 4 was of the right sort; they did not want to retire, they wanted to 'get a bit back,' but did not know how to act."

THE ESSEX ATTACK AND DEATH OF LIEUT.-COLONEL RADCLYFFE.

When the 11th Essex reached Bethune about 1.30 o'clock on the morning of September 25th, the men were thoroughly worn out. One of the companies found billets in a brewery, which, as

it turned out, was also occupied by a party of Belgian refugees. Orders were issued for the Battalion to be ready to move at an hour's notice. Breakfast was about to be eaten at 9 a.m., when officers were ordered to report at once to battalion headquarters for orders, whilst the men stood-to. Meantime, the latter were issued with gas masks, consisting of an oblong piece of mica, to which was attached a pad of black gauze soaked in acid. The company commanders were: "A" Captain Scott; "B," Captain Tenbosch; "C," Captain Gulliland; "D," Captain Read. Preliminary instructions were issued for the impending attack and in the excitement of the time the necessity for taking a meal when occasion offered was not generally appreciated, though its value was quickly realized when two hours were spent waiting for the order to march. Some of the more enterprising endeavoured to make up for the deficiency by hasty visits to a neighbouring café. At 11 a.m. the Battalion commenced its march along Lens road, halting near Noyelles for three hours for haversack rations and water for the bottles. Progress was slow, for the road was choked with traffic returning from the front, including the lightly wounded of both friend and foe. The former brought reports and rumours as to how things were going on at the front. The enemy were said to have been driven back several miles, an optimistic statement which later on turned out to be a substantial exaggeration. After a while the Brigade left the main road, a track being taken in the direction of Vermelles, to the north of the road. The back line of the British "heavies" was passed a mile or two short of the village. When still a little short of Vermelles, the Brigade halted for the afternoon, in line with a group of batteries, which kept firing at short intervals all the time. At 6 p.m. a portion of the haversack rations was eaten with what water it was felt could be spared, because the Essex were told they would not get in touch with their transport, which had been left in the rear. About dusk hand grenades were drawn by the responsible squads and by the time the issue was completed the Brigade was moving off through the village. Shortly after passing Vermelles the Battalion opened out into artillery formation. Rifle fire was going on a little way off on the Brigade's left, from which it appeared that very little advance could have been made in that direction, at any rate, as the original front line had not yet been reached. When the latter point was passed about 9 p.m. there was a pause to enable the Brigade to form up on a two battalion front, with the Essex and Suffolks (right) leading, followed by the Norfolks and Bedfords. The advance was resumed at 10 p.m., so that the Battalion's right would pass Lone Tree in lines of platoons, keeping touch with the Suffolks. It was at Lone Tree the Essex had their first experience of hostile fire. It was very mild and slightly wounded one officer (Lieut. Clifford) and one man. "The enemy also put over," wrote Captain A. K. Fison, "spasmodic

high explosive shell. One big fellow, apparently an eight inch, went off about every two minutes in the same spot, throwing up fountains of earth and clods. He did no harm, however, as far as our fellows were concerned, and the first casualty was caused by a nearly spent bullet from nowhere in particular, which hit a man in the neck." There was a wait in extended order for three hours. Just before dawn the Battalion reached the German trench system on the crest of the ridge opposite Hulluch. It was the support to their original front line. When day broke the men presented an extraordinary spectacle, for it had rained a good deal the afternoon before and the whole place was a mass of chalky mud. In the trench were a number of dead and wounded of both nations, together with a miscellaneous assortment of kit, ammunition and bombs. In the dug-outs were found food and cigars which had been hastily left behind upon the previous day's advance. These formed a welcome addition to breakfast, which otherwise would have consisted solely of the remains of the haversack ration, the iron ration and the last drops from the water bottle." Suddenly the order came at 11 a.m. for the battalions to form up and advance in support of the 72nd Brigade. The Battalion moved forward in lines of platoons, "B" and "A" Companies leading, with "D" and "C" in support. The Battalion was not aware of the precise objective of the attack, but actually moved in the direction of Stützpunkt III, advancing parallel with, and about 600 yards south of, the Vermelles-Hulluch road. "Towards mid-day," recalled Signaller E. W. Wicks, "the C.O. simply said, '11th Essex get out of the trench' and the word was passed along, followed by the order, 'Artillery formation to the right'." The ground at first was a reverse slope. The rise was soon passed. From it Hulluch could be seen. The left of the Battalion was apparently in the air and, in fact, all the protection there was from the 2nd Welch, of the 1st Division, who were directed against the southern end of Hulluch and part of whose personnel became intermixed with the Essex in the final stages of the struggle. As the Essex went down the forward slope to the low ground through which ran the main Lens-La Bassée road, first fire from field guns and then machine guns opened upon them in enfilade sited apparently in and around Hulluch village. The commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel Radclyffe—leading the Battalion, came in hand and with a small dog barking at his heels—the second-in-command, Major Davies (both killed) and the Adjutant (Captain Heppell), wounded, all went down within a few minutes before the machine gun fire, which "rattled like a mowing machine." The Lens-La Bassée road was crossed at its junction with the Hulluch road. Many men had fallen by this time. The 72nd Brigade inclined to the right in the direction of Stützpunkt IV, but the 11th Essex tended to the left in company with the 2nd Welch. The latter achieved the

great success of the day in getting into the German front line. Movement became impossible as a formed body, but with magnificent courage parties of the leading companies of the Essex persisted right up to the German line, where survivors strove to pass the uncut wire. They could not do so, but they clung to the ground they had won. Fortune was against them, however, and when morning came these dogged survivors were taken prisoner. The remainder of the attack—carried out as if on parade—had stopped at a point some three hundred yards east of the Lens-La Bassée road, when an order came—at 11.80 a.m.—for the Battalion to get into a sunken track on the right, to the west of the road mentioned above. Though it was not known from whom it came, it seemed so in keeping with the requirements of the situation that it was promptly complied with. The retirement was carried out with excellent discipline. Many of the packs had to be left behind, for the tramway rails crossing the lane afforded only about 2ft. headway. To have got into the open would have revealed the whereabouts of the troops. From the sunken road fire was opened upon Hulluch with rifles and Lewis guns and an effort was also made to organize scattered parties of other regiments, who manned the easternmost points of the old German trench system, known as Alley IV. Though the troops were massed in the sunken road as thickly as sardines in a box, there was no stampeding and, what was more remarkable, although shrapnel was dropping all round, there were few casualties. At 4 p.m. the British artillery heavily bombarded Hulluch and the Hulluch road leading to the Lens-La Bassée road with gas projectiles and several parties of our troops were seen apparently attacking with a machine gun, only to be driven back by snipers in front of Hulluch. The latter also enfiladed trenches running north and south, and, as a result, the Battalion manned the communication trench running east and west. The men worked hard on the trenches until midnight, when the Essex were relieved and returned to the trenches near Lone Tree, which they had left the night before. To this point, with great difficulty, owing to traffic congestion, food and water were taken from Le Rutoire Farm. At 5 a.m. on September 27th the 1st Guards Brigade came in and the Battalion went back to Le Rutoire Farm and manned the trenches in front of it. The Battalion, in its first encounter, suffered the loss of 18 officers and 353 other ranks, but they had the distinction, with the 2nd Welch, of being shown upon a map in the Official History of the War as having reached their objective, even though they could not hold it. The heaviest loss was that of all the senior officers at the time when cool and experienced direction was most needed. The 11th Essex had nine officers killed, viz., Lieut.-Colonel Charles Edward Radelyffe, Major John Llewelyn Davies, Captain Geoffrey Brisselier Davies, Lieutenants Frank Stevenson Long, Maurice Austin Murray,

Albert Herbert Raynes and 2nd Lieutenants Hugo Charles Meynell, John Frederick Cullingford Read and Cecil Arthur Bedells.

"The bearing of the men was splendid," wrote an Essex officer. "Everyone was as cool as possible. As good as a peace parade, and better. The excitement made it better. The machine gunners were particularly cool and the highest praise is due to both officers and men. They all advanced with the Battalion, two guns on the left flank and two in the centre. They did a lot to keep down the German fire and were probably chiefly responsible for the Germans not counter-attacking after we were beaten off. During the withdrawal they moved into the gully (sunken road), where they continued to fire, with the exception of the left gun, which moved straight back. No. 3 team took up a position above the bridge in the gully, where it was badly shelled and the gun was abandoned, as it was quite useless. The other two were stationed below it and one of them fired several three to four hundred rounds with a broken piston rod quite easily. . . . We thought we were only moving up in support. We never knew where we were. That dreadful lost feeling is one of the worst things to face in war."

The adventures of the wounded were many and various, some of the less fortunate having to lie by the German wire where they had fallen, but others were able to walk back to the casualty stations. Captain A. K. Fison recalls that the attack had developed into a series of small groups and individuals crawling forward independently in the grass and stubble. "I was hit in the right arm by a rifle bullet. The wound was soon bound up by a private of the West Kents who happened to be near. There appeared no good to be done by either going on or staying where I was, so I started trying to crawl back. This soon proved too painful and the only practical method seemed to be to double in short rushes from one shell-hole to another. This process ultimately brought me to the Lens-Hulluch road, after being shot at more than I cared for, and here I was glad to strike the beginning of a communication trench (of course, one of the old German communication trenches). I got slowly along this, progress being very slow owing to its being full of wounded, mostly badly hit and waiting for the stretcher-bearers. Some way up the hill, Gulliland and one of his orderlies, Skinner, of my platoon, suddenly appeared on the parapet and got into the trench. He was in a very dazed condition, having been knocked down and stunned by a shell. We went back slowly together, suffering a good deal from thirst. Skinner, however, managed to get a water bottle full at a well near the old German front line. From this point as far back as the dressing station at Le Rutoire was being shelled with 'crumps,' but we got safely through it, and here I left Gulliland and walked on alone into Vermelles, where I was lucky enough to run into the company cooks and get a cup of tea. No news was to be had of any of the

Battalion here, unfortunately. I then went on to one of the field ambulances, got my arm properly dressed and just as it was getting dusk, got a lift on the front of an ambulance to the field hospital at Noeux-les-Mines."

"The advance had only just commenced," wrote Signaller E. W. Wicks, "when I was blown up by the explosion of a shell. Another signaller who was wounded and spent his sick leave at Wallingford told the head of my school there that he had seen me killed and my parents forwarded his letter of condolence, which reached me when we were at Potijze. My next recollection is of crawling in a gully and my next of carrying rations at night for some unit, not the 11th Essex. We passed Lone Tree and I heard Captain Scott ('A' Company) talking to S.M. Whittaker, who was wounded. I next remember being in a trench with a 'C' Company signaller (Ewins) and Lieut. Hasler. I remembered the Guards relieved us that night, but why I did not go out of the line with the Essex, I do not know. I remember the following day I was still in the region of Lone Tree. I was very thirsty and I had been hungry, too, but had eaten some jam. Of what happened during the rest of the day I have only the vaguest recollection, though I remember Q.M.S. Boreham ('A' Company) telling me he had got me down as killed. I imagine I was wandering all over the place in a dazed condition. Subsequently I improved and returned to routine duty."

"Loos, September, 1915," wrote Corporal G. W. Chase, "was my most poignant memory of the war and my most vivid, because it was the Battalion's first insight into active service. A new battalion, full strength, goes into action; fellows who had trained together in England; fellows of every kind from every part of Essex and London, varying in temperaments, likes and dislikes, from every conceivable trade and calling, gradually welded together into a vast family, a battalion. Training together, first at Shoreham, then to Brighton and so on, until they leave Aldershot late one night to arrive in the grey dawn in France. A few weeks' further training, then a long march through the night. Bethune for an hour or two. Vermelles—then they are in the welter, this happy crowd who had trained together for so long. New experiences; bewildering and terrifying; men destroyed; bursting shells; carnage, shambles; time counted for nothing. I was in a field some time later. I do not know how long—it does not matter. The Battalion is formed up into companies. The Q.M. Sergeants are calling the roll. That is all—calling the roll! The Battalion had gone into its first action full strength. And now!"

The outstanding points to be remembered about the Battle of Hulluch have been summarized by an Essex officer as follow: "The Battalion attacked with the men laden with full packs and in full marching order; the machine gunners also had their heavy guns and tripods as well. There was no Battalion conference

with explanation of a defined, restricted objective. We just went off into the blue from trenches the exact position of which no one knew. Information was extremely vague as to where the Germans or other regiments were; the maps we possessed were only to half-inch scale. We were raw troops, concentrated well to the south of the battle zone, and then by forced marches by night as a brigade, with interminable halts, brought straight up into a battle line, although we had never heard a shot fired in anger before. In any event, we arrived too late. The first offensive had spent itself. The Germans had had plenty of time to organize and were ready for us behind uncut wire. The whole haphazard episode compares vividly with the careful preparations which were made in the later phases of the war. It was an expensive lesson, however. The 11th Essex were the finest human material England could produce, all volunteers, the very pick of the population physically. For reward for their valour under most difficult and depressing circumstances they were told that report said they had run away, whereas in actual fact they did more than seasoned troops would have done, for I believe they would have had more sense than to walk straight into almost certain death, as the two brigades of the 24th Division were asked to do—and did.”

A PRISONER'S ESCAPE.

Among the prisoners taken was Lieut. Philip F. Dale, son of the Vicar of Hornchurch, Essex, whose subsequent adventures constitute a thrilling chapter of war experiences. Lieut. Dale found himself separated from his company, with one sergeant. Together they lay concealed under bushes hoping to escape observation by the enemy until they could rejoin their regiment when dusk fell. After two hours, however, they were discovered and taken prisoners. On arriving at the enemy camp, Lieut. Dale was courteously treated by the officers, offered cigarettes and given food, and his wound in the leg dressed. In his diary-letter home the next three days record “eat and slept.” On the Thursday they were conveyed by cart to train and then to Gütersloh, where he was in hospital till his wound recovered. On the train journey, at Douai station, the train was met by the “Dames de Douai,” who gave to each officer prisoner the welcome and much appreciated gift of a shirt and socks, cigarettes and chocolate. After two months at Gütersloh camp, Lieut. Dale was moved to Fürstenberg—one of the best officers' camps—where he met again Lieut. Middleton, of the 11th Essex, the other officer to have been taken prisoner on September 26th. From Fürstenberg—in May, 1917—Lieut. Dale made his first attempt to escape, but he was immediately re-captured and was sentenced to four months' solitary confinement. The Hague Conference, however, which was sitting at that time, limited the duration of solitary confinement to two weeks, thus

reducing his term to two months. His imprisonment was passed in the basement of the same camp—Fürstenberg—and on one occasion was increased by another week for rejoining his former fellow prisoners above, on the coming-of-age of his friend, Lieut. Middleton. Fortunately for him, the parcels to the prisoners were unpacked in the basement and, through the kindness of his warders, he was allowed to see the books found in the parcels before they were “passed” for the upstairs camp. During his daily two hours of out-door exercise round the small courtyard he would repeat aloud Tennyson’s “Maud” and other poems. After his term of solitary confinement was over, Lieut. Dale was moved to other camps specially allotted to “escapers.” He followed Captain Evans, of the “Escaping Club,” at Fort 9, Ingoldstadt, and from there was moved to Lüdwigshafen. At both these camps how to escape occupied the thoughts and time of the prisoners, and skeleton keys, suitable disguises, maps and outfits were by degrees evolved and accumulated. On Sunday, May 5th, 1918, Lieut. Dale made his fifth and successful attempt to escape. It would, perhaps, be interesting to mention that when fresh ideas for escape were formed, lots would be drawn as to who should make the next attempt or it was taken in turn. For this reason, Lieut. Dale missed a coveted but uncomfortable start home in a packing case. He succeeded in walking out through the porters’ room during the guard’s Sunday afternoon siesta and catching a train at Mannheim, dressed like an ordinary German in black suit and slouch hat. Two fellow prisoners also made their escape within two minutes of him and of each other, and it was agreed that they should not—if they met—take any notice of each other. Lieut. Dale found himself sitting opposite to one of them in the railway compartment—a fortunate thing for him, as after the tense anxiety and excitement of his escape, the collar he wore was reduced to a sodden damp mass and his silent friend handed him a newspaper, in which he found a clean dry collar thoughtfully concealed. By making the railway journeys in short stretches, detection was rendered less likely. At Cologne Lieut. Dale took the opportunity of seeing the cathedral, where he spent an hour or two. The last two days before he reached Holland he made the journey on foot, walking through the villages with as little—and monosyllabic—German as possible. He slept in a wood on the borderland the last night. Then he wriggled flat on his stomach across the last road, where sentinels were in sight. There he lay, hardly daring to breathe, under a hedge in a ditch for three-quarters of an hour, while a sentry—evidently suspecting something—walked up and down or stood within a few yards of him, finally walking to his post satisfied that all was clear! Then a furtive leap and the boundary was actually crossed, but it was not till he had walked for another hour and waded through a river, that Lieut. Dale could be sure that he really

was on Dutch soil and was free. The moment when it came, he said, was the most wonderful he would ever experience in all his life. There he found hospitable shelter and rest in a cottage, though he was soon taken into custody by the Police till it was proved that he was actually a British officer and was escorted to the British Consul at Rotterdam, where he was supplied with clothes and again once more set free. He had reached Holland on the fifth day after his escape, and on Sunday, May 12th, exactly one week after he had walked out of the porter's room at Lüdwigsthafen, Lieut. Dale arrived home after a captivity of two years and seven months. He was later received by H.M. the King and on the same morning his friend, Captain Wilson—who had been one of his fellow-escapers—was also received at Buckingham Palace. As a charming instance of the King's tact, Lieut. Dale received a second telegram from Buckingham Palace altering the time of his audience by half-an-hour—this was to allow of himself and his (older) friend each to have a personal interview instead of being taken in together. Lieut. Dale was awarded the Military Cross for the valuable information he was able to give to the War Office. After his escape, Lieut. Dale qualified for the Intelligence Service and, owing to his proficiency in languages, acquired while a prisoner—French, Russian and German—he was attached to the staff of the Fifth Army Intelligence Corps in France, with the rank of captain, in September, 1918. After his return, on demobilization, in March, 1919, Captain Dale felt that he was one of those who—having had so short a time in the war—ought to answer the call to help Russia and he volunteered for service there in April, 1919. He was, therefore, sent out in October to join Denekin's army in South Russia, with the rank of captain. His chief work whilst there was to supervise the evacuation from Kiev, there being no consul in the city. Captain Dale organized the relief train, canvassing the town for those inhabitants who wished to leave by it. When the retreating train was well on its way, he was met at a roadside station by official orders appointing him Vice-Consul of Kiev. The long train—on its dreary three weeks' journey through snow—reached Odessa on Christmas Eve, 1919. In February, 1920, the British Army evacuated Russia and Captain Dale left Odessa with other British officers and refugees in the last boat, after helping in the removal of those inhabitants who wished to leave. Captain Dale was subsequently appointed upon the staff of the Survey Department in the Gold Coast. His work there was valued highly by the Department and his death in March, 1926, at the age of 30—while revising the western boundary—was esteemed a heavy loss.

AFTER THE ATTACK.

The experiences immediately subsequent to the attack were also very trying. "About midnight," wrote Major Hasler, "we went

back into the second line from which we launched the attack. Here a ration and water party was organized, which started for Le Rutoire for provisions. On arrival there great difficulty was experienced. The men were 'done up' and hard to keep together. There were similar parties from all kinds of regiments and the place was full of wounded. There was only one pump in a bomb proof and this had a perpetual 'scrum' round it. However, we at last succeeded in getting some biscuits and bully and several petrol tanks of water and started off. The men could hardly carry the heavy tins and boxes; they were so exhausted. However, we got back to the trench, God knows how, and settled down. When the Guards took over very early in the morning of September 27th we marched back to Lone Tree, which was the chief dressing station. At Le Rutoire we spent the remainder of the night in another set of trenches. At daylight we collected the Battalion together and marched off towards Vermelles. About half a mile on our way we came upon overturned stores in a trench and had a royal feed of biscuits, bully, jam, rum, etc.—the first meal since breakfast at Bethune. In fact, from Saturday morning to Monday morning, we had nothing to eat or drink except the little we carried with us. Our water bottles were used for the wounded and we were absolutely parched. Our troubles were by no means ended, however, as our breakfast was interrupted by shrapnel and we had to hurriedly move on. A Taube came over and as far as one can judge, by describing an arc in the air, directed fire upon a transport column which was moving along a road to the west. It was having a pretty hot time, the shells dropping very accurately. We pushed on through Vermelles, getting some water as we passed. The town was crowded with wounded and enduring intermittent shell-fire. We were directed to Noyelles Vermelles, where we found our transport and had our first hot meal since Bethune. We were not left in peace long, as we had to change our bivouac before night to another field three-quarters of a mile off. On Tuesday, September 28th, we moved our bivouac another few hundred yards and were hunted from pillar to post until finally we entrained at Noeux-les-Mines for Burguette-en-Artois, where, in a heavy rainstorm, we found the rest of the Brigade. The Division was being taken out of the line for reorganization. The Brigade moved again to Ham-en-Artois, where, with the Norfolks, the Essex occupied the same billets as they had done previously."

There was another move on October 2nd, this time for billets south-east of Proven, where, during the next few days, drafts totalling 358 N.C.O.'s and men brought the Battalion once more up to strength. Major C. J. Hobkirk arrived to take command on October 9th, the day after "A" Company had entered the trenches to receive instruction from the 4th Royal Fusiliers. The Essex left Proven on October 15th for "A" Camp, from whence "B" Company went into trenches on the Canal Bank north

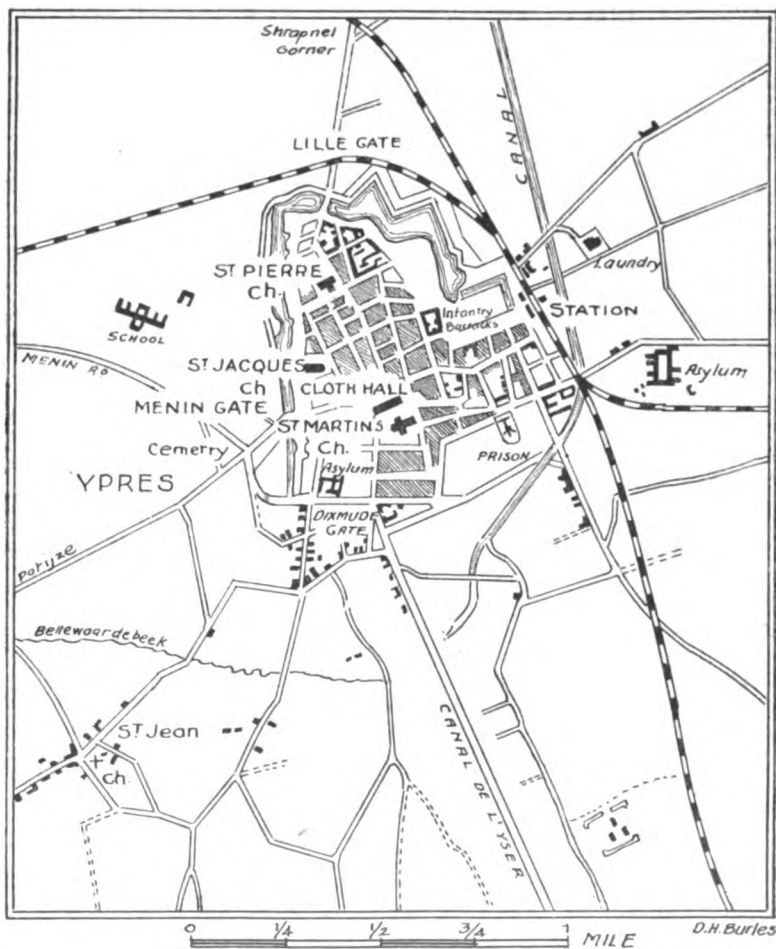
of Ypres on October 20th, as reserve for the front line on Buffs Road. Two days later the Battalion was in trenches east of La Brique, in relief of the 8th Bedford, who left their machine gun section behind until the Essex section arrived the next day.

TRANSFER TO THE 6th DIVISION.

On October 24th orders came for the transfer of the 11th Essex to the 18th Infantry Brigade of the 6th Division. Considerable alterations were being made in the constitution of the 24th Division. The 71st Brigade was transferred as a body to the 6th Division, but upon arrival the composition of the Brigade was changed by sending the 8th Bedford to the 16th Brigade and the 11th Essex to the 18th Brigade, their places being taken respectively by the 1st Leicestershires from the 16th Brigade and the 2nd Sherwood Foresters from the 18th Brigade. The relief of the Essex by the Sherwood Foresters took place daily by companies. The movement was complete by October 27th.

The 6th Division (Sir John Keir) was originally composed entirely of Regular battalions. The 16th and 17th Brigades mobilized at Fermoy and Cork respectively and the 18th Brigade at Lichfield, the whole being concentrated in and around Cambridge and Newmarket by August 18th, 1914. The Division arrived in France on September 9th and was joined at St. Omer by the 19th Brigade, being in time to take part in the Battle of the Aisne. It went first into the line along the high ground just south of the Chemin les Dames, to the north and north-east of Troyon. The Division played a conspicuous part in the Battles of Ypres, 1914, after which, for a time, each Brigade had attached to it a Territorial battalion for instruction. In May, 1915, Major-General W. N. Congreve, V.C., succeeded to the divisional command upon Sir John Keir's promotion to the VI Corps. Service continued in the Ypres Salient, broken only by a period at Armentieres. In August, 1915, the Division gallantly restored the line at Hooge after the Germans had created a critical situation by a successful attack.

The Division, after reconstitution, remained in the Salient until the end of July, 1916, having in its thirteen months' tour of duty there suffered eleven thousand casualties. During the latter period there was no battle fighting, but turns in the trenches in monotonous succession, remembered particularly because of the terrible conditions which ensued upon the wet weather of the winter of 1915-16. There was at one time a term of concentrated training over dummy trenches for an attack on Pilekem Ridge, which was to be undertaken in co-operation with the Guards. The project was not carried out owing to the transfer of the 6th Division to the Somme, but the same idea formed the basis of a successful effort by the Guards and the



Many of the places referred to in plan of Ypres, given above, are mentioned in the chapter following, "Service in the Salient."

Welsh Division when the Third Battle of Ypres commenced on 31st July, 1917.

A party of one officer and 25 picked men represented the Battalion at a review by H.M. the King near Abeele, on October 27th. Those of the Battalion left in the trenches had an exciting experience on October 26th, when a patrol unexpectedly met an enemy party. Both immediately sought cover, but the Germans first threw their grenades, from which, however, the pins had not been withdrawn. An Essex officer went out subsequently and picked them up. The Battalion had charge of a new line of trenches running from just east of Warwick Farm to Crump Farm, with headquarters at Potijze Wood. There they suffered intense bombardment, about 600 shells falling in an hour. One and a half companies were temporarily left in the Potijze line upon relief of the remainder of the Essex by the Queen's Westminsters on the night of October 29th. They went to reserve trenches on the Canal Bank, north of Ypres, suffering a dozen casualties in so doing.

For some time the Prince of Wales was on the 6th Divisional staff, so the 11th Essex saw him frequently. "On one occasion he came into our headquarters dug-out," recalled an officer, "and chatted for some time. He expressed his views about men and things with a freedom which we thoroughly enjoyed, especially in regard to one matter which those present will recall with amusement, but which is not part of this story. One time I saw him riding a cycle along the Poperinghe-Vlamertinghe road. He had the wind against him and riding on the cobbles could have been no pleasure trip at any time. Added to which, as this road was frequently and accurately shelled, it was far from being a health resort and was avoided by all as much as possible. On another occasion, when I was at Richeborg St. Vaast at the headquarters of the 1st Guards Brigade (General Lowther), a motor car drove up and out got the Prince and a staff officer. While his companion was busy the Prince made off in the direction of the trenches. Next thing we knew a hue and cry had been raised and someone sent post haste to find him."

SERVICE IN THE SALIENT.

The nature of service in the Salient is, perhaps, best realized by the story of an Essex officer, Lieut. T. Gordon Murray. "When newly commissioned after a month's course at Cadet School in France," he wrote, "I came home to London, on four days' leave, in order to get my uniform and kit, previous to joining the 11th Essex (the beginning of service with the Battalion, which was to last continuously until I was demobilized). Discussing the future with my parents, we wondered where I should find this Battalion. 'Well,' I said, 'I don't much mind where I have to go, but I'd rather it wasn't Ypres,' but, sure

enough, I found the Battalion in November, 1915, in reserve dug-outs on the Yser Canal. The Salient had many objectionable features. The chief was its contour, which allowed the enemy to enfilade our trenches. Then the Germans held the high ground, so that in wet weather they could easily drain their trenches into ours. The depth of the Salient congested transport, and in order to escape the shelled area troops on rest had to march long distances to and from the trenches. The enemy were round us on three sides, and from the front line, looking back and seeing the Verey lights at night, it was difficult to believe that we were not entirely surrounded. Ypres, itself, was at this time badly knocked about and the only weather-proof places were the cellars and parts of the prison. At times the Battalion, when out of the trenches, was actually billeted in the town, but more often it was in the dug-outs on the Canal Bank. Shells fell into the town at any moment, and both Ypres and the Canal banks were subject to daily heavy shelling. There were still evidences of civil occupation. In the cathedral were some of the banners, in the shops and houses were broken furniture, correspondence, etc. At the railway station were tickets to places in enemy occupation, and at the convent were music and needlework. Pigeons still nested in large numbers in the ruined cathedral. D—, who was an excellent revolver shot, brought down three one morning and we had them for lunch, but found them rather tough. The troops made themselves as comfortable as possible in the cellars of the town, which, furnished in some cases very plentifully with beds, chairs, praying stools, pianos, carpets, curtains, etc., from the houses, presented a somewhat bizarre appearance when lit with candles stuck in bottles. The Canal Bank dug-outs were safe enough inside, but the bursts of shelling to which the area was subjected made it a nasty spot. In the vicinity were such places as Devil's Elbow and Hellfire Corner, which were aptly named.

"The dug-outs were infested with rats. On one occasion one gnawed through the haversack which I was using as a pillow and ate the biscuits I had there. Creasy complained one morning of a rat which he found sitting on his foot during the night. He kicked it off and went to sleep, only to awake and find it there again. The third time this happened he considered it hopeless to protest, so allowed the persistent rodent to remain! We shot and hunted them with dogs. Captain Brennan's 'Gib' won much renown as a 'ratter,' and it was no unusual thing to see the little dog busy at a 'kill' with a large and excited crowd, including the General, applauding his pluck and skill. It was a sad day when 'Gib' was temporarily laid out by a cudgel blow, but he soon recovered. Creasy was a very keen rat hunter and popular interest ran high when Hasler got three ferrets out from England. They provided plenty of excitement for a time, but did not long survive.

"All those who served in the Salient will agree that one of its most objectionable features was the mud. This made journeys to and from the front line and on working, carrying and ration fatigues a very difficult business. Indeed, during a quiet spell, the reliefs were often more dreaded than the days of trench duty. It was no ordinary mud, but the result of months of fighting, shelling and tramping over marshy ground. It was real agony, apart from the danger from shelling and machine gun fire, to go up to the front line (at night, of course) with full equipment and rations. Near Lancashire Farm there was a trench railway up to the support line—and it was much used by the infantry. It was no easy task to walk along it on a dark night. One had to step from sleeper to sleeper—and a false step sent one into soft mud up to one's knees. A man slipping into the mud generally had to be hauled out, and I've known men wearing thigh gum boots who had to leave them in the mud and continue their journey to the fire trenches in their socks. Small wonder that a youngster newly out would break down in tears from sheer fatigue and vexation, soon fulfilling the prophecy of the old hands, who, hearing a draft arrive in billets singing, 'Are we downhearted? No,' would retort, 'Well, you d—— soon will be.' Those were the 'months of boredom'—or worse—which, with 'days of terror,' according to Bairnsfather, make up war.

"In the trenches, owing to the nature of the ground, deep dug-outs were impossible. The trenches were shallow and breastworks and parados were built up with sandbags. Corrugated iron was our main but insufficient defence against shelling and weather. Hot food was rare, as it was difficult to have fires. Any trace of smoke was quickly spotted and brought down shelling. I remember on one occasion some men had contrived a fire in a brazier. They had taken great care by using small slips of wood, but a slight smoke was caused, and as they sat round the fire a 'whizz-bang' came over and actually hit it, but, in an extraordinary way, no one was hurt. Even as far back as the Canal Bank smoke had to be suppressed, and I remember one irate battalion commander in our Brigade, who, considering that his men were not using sufficient care in this respect, rushed down the tow-path kicking braziers into the Canal. A favourite dodge of the Germans, when a shell had knocked in a piece of breastwork, was to employ a fixed rifle to fire at intervals, or train a machine gun on the spot, so making its repair at night a dangerous business. They used aerial torpedoes a good deal. These could be seen rising into the air, reaching the top of their flight, and then descending. It was possible to judge to some extent where they would fall—and everyone tried to be somewhere else. It was quite exciting and almost amusing to watch for these missiles and as they began to descend there would be a jostling scamper of those in the danger zone, as they rushed

helter-skelter, in the narrow confines of the trench, to get as far as possible from where the bomb would drop. The explosion was violent and powerful, but quite local, so that men a few yards away behind a traverse were out of danger.

"Poperinghe, or 'Pop,' in spite of the heavy shelling it received from time to time, was much thought of by the troops. Here were shops, restaurants and cafés. The men could get their coffee, 'chips' and omelets, and the officers were fairly well catered for in the hotels and tea shops. The fare was a welcome change from rations. Here were also baths and 'The Fancies' (6th Division Concert Party) and cinemas. Officers and men had dry floors to sleep on, which was almost a luxury. Later on 'Talbot House' was established, where a deal of ingenuity was displayed in introducing special comforts and delicacies.

"One has many memories of the town, but one of the most amusing to me concerned Brennan's dog 'Gib.' In the billet we occupied at this time the Belgians were still residing in part of the premises, and they had some fine rabbits in the back-yard. 'Gib' used to watch these, but kept himself under control. Some time later we were in a camp a distance from the town. The little dog, however, made his way to our former billet and killed one of the rabbits. It was really unlucky for him that his cunning proved of no avail, because, later on, we were again allotted the same billet in Poperinghe, and 'Gib' was promptly seized by the angry civilian, who was about to give him a bad time, when Brennan intervened. Explanations followed and a cash payment smoothed things over, but we all thought 'Gib's' artfulness in delaying his attack on the rabbits deserved more success.

"The mention of baths calls up varied memories. The early bathing arrangements at 'Pop' were primitive. The men got, say, 20 or 30 at a time into huge vats in the brewery. The water was changed as often as could be arranged. One had a special feeling of vulnerability if shelling commenced at such times. Later on came the spray baths, which had the advantage that one had the water all to one's self—but not much and not for long. At the word of command the men each entered a small canvas-screened space and stood under a nozzle. The water was turned on long enough for a quick man to wet himself all over. There was an interval for soaping, then a short spraying to rinse the soap off—then out you went to dry yourself. This done, clean underclothes were issued. You sometimes had to go in search of these down a cement path in the cold air. Sometimes the things were new, but as often as not, of course, they were somebody else's which had been cleaned, and sometimes they were nearly your size. Often the Battalion would march a long distance for this bath and clean change. When we were resting at Watou on one occasion, for instance, we left for 'Pop' at 5.30 a.m. and after baths did not arrive back till noon. This

subject of baths reminds me that the French and Belgians appeared to think us queer in this respect. On one occasion I found some folks who had rigged up tin baths in a barn, which they let you use at one franc a time. I told them what a treat it was to be able to lie down in a real bath, and they thereupon confessed that the baths had been specially arranged for the English, as they themselves only bathed 'in the season,' whatever that meant.

"In our journeyings to and from the trenches we sometimes were taken by train past Vlamertinghe as far as the Asylum at Ypres, and the Battalion had several nightmare trips on this railway, either going into the 'line' or when we were ordered on working parties. On the latter we did four hours' work, and the journey generally occupied six hours, and was, therefore, very annoying. The track being under enemy observation, it was only used at night and no lights or even cigarette smoking were allowed. Noise was reduced to a minimum, but the Germans often put heavy shells over, and these, in the darkness, when they burst and shook the train, always seemed to be much nearer than they were. The delights of the journey were not increased by the walk along the sleepers at the Ypres end. In the dark it was difficult to guess where the next sleeper was and to judge the length of step accordingly. It was also desirable to avoid, if possible, the jarring stumble occasioned by missing the sleeper.

"On our way to the trenches in front of Potijze we used to leave Ypres by the Menin Gate, which in those days was a gap in the ramparts through which ran the road. There was a heavily sandbagged defensive post—manned by a garrison—and barbed wire obstacles were in readiness to block the road in case of need. Troops marching through, wishing to be facetious, would pass back a message, 'Last man shut the gate.' There were sentries on duty and at night they challenged approaching parties, the usual call being, 'Oo are yer?' to which the reply would be, '11th Essex,' '1st West Yorks,' etc., as the case might be. It was reported that on one occasion the sentry was told to mind his own ——— business, whereupon he answered, 'Pass, Canadians.' I said 'marching' above, but we were always careful to break step as we approached the line, in order to minimize the risk of being heard by the enemy.

"In order to keep the breastworks from being washed down into the trenches by rain and snow, hurdles were placed against the sides and wired back at the top. This was called revetting. In winter the trenches were generally knee-deep, or worse, in mud and water, so trench boards were put down to make it possible to walk along. Often for some reason or other a revetting hurdle would get loose and fall across the trench, and very frequently a part of a trench board would rot or get broken, so leaving a hole into which one could step and get a bad stumble. It can be imagined what these obstacles, etc., would mean to a man who had been on the march for three or more hours and was

groping his way along in the dark laden with pack, rifle, rations and, perhaps, a can of water. Imagine what a stout lad from Durham would say, as in the dark he fell over a hurdle or crashed down a hole! The Very lights were not the only things which made the night lurid.

"About December, 1915, the company mess carts—purchased from civilians and decidedly not on 'establishment'—came into vogue, and a deal of ingenuity had to be exercised in getting them from place to place without provoking enquiry on the part of higher authority. They were very useful as a means of transporting additional comforts for officers and men, especially the former, be it confessed. All the company messes were thus able to carry about a gramophone and records, which were used even in front line dug-outs, and many an uninteresting meal was made more palatable by the playing of a record of de Groot's orchestra. In 'C' Company mess Scott was the great patron of the gramophone. He would lean back, as we listened to 'Bird of Love Divine,' and exclaim 'I do love music with my meals,' only to bound from his seat and rush with cursings at the offending instrument as it 'ran down.' On one occasion the gramophone was in danger of being left in the trenches, but a gallant private soldier carried it miles through the mud and I'm sure Scott thought he deserved quite a lot of Military Medals for this heroic deed. A year or two afterwards we had a gallant senior officer who was engaged to a widow. Whenever he entered a company mess—in a billet or in the line—you could depend on someone setting the gramophone going with 'Widows are Wonderful.' Returning to the company carts, they were of all sorts and shapes. Bartlett was a great man for creature comforts and under him 'A' Company mess had a reputation in this respect. He had a high dog-cart and it was a sight for the gods, when we were near any large town, to see him driving off—huge fellow that he was—perched up on the small cart—usually with "Cherry" Scott and Ferguson, one on each side of him—in search of relaxation and stores for the mess, much after the manner of a four-in-hand on the road to Brighton.

"One very regrettable incident illustrates the difficulties under which we moved about. The Battalion was marching down to the Canal bank one dark night in February, 1916, after a tour in the line. The deep snow made it more than usually hard to get along, because it was so easy to slip into shellholes when wearing gum-boots and equipment. Major Harris, the second-in-command, was leading the way as we approached the end of the Canal and, failing to see the edge, fell over into the mud and snow, which lay a considerable distance below. It was impossible in the darkness for him to find the near-by steps, so he had to make his way as best he could till he came upon some means of getting up the bank. The effect of the accident in wintry weather was very severe and Major Harris had to go to hospital and thence to England."

A humorous story is related by a man of the 11th Essex of the Canal Bank in the Ypres Salient. He tells it thus : " Outside the headquarters dug-out stood the C.O. engaged in conversation with the Brigadier. The Brigadier was obviously very angry. He gesticulated much and as he became more heated, so he stepped backward. A splash. They fished him out a symphony in green slime—and the otherwise active Canal Bank became suddenly as deserted as a grave."

Other stories of this period have been recalled by Corporal G. W. Chase. " The Battalion was taking over a choice piece of line about Pilckem Ridge, not trenches, but a series of connected 'Minnie' holes. It was a dismal night and raining. Squelch, squelch, through the mud we went. Some had gum-boots on, including an officer. Suddenly a voice was heard, 'Help me, I'm stuck.' Valiantly the men tugged, but the tenacious mud was not to be beaten that way. After about five minutes a resigned voice was heard to say, 'I suppose there is no other way.' There was not and he finished the journey in his socks." Then, again, one day in November, 1915, "the front line were astounded to hear, clearly and most pronounced, the ting-a-ling of a bicycle bell. Picture their amazement when they saw, pedalling like mad up the main Potijze road, in full view of the Germans, the Signal Officer. Neither he nor his machine sustained a puncture. It was about eleven in the morning, a brilliant sunshiny day. Incidentally, he continued to pay his morning visits in this way ; he said it was quicker." Another memory. "We were having an open-air concert. The Battalion was seated around the stage, situated in a field between Vlamertinghe and Poperinghe. Two bright lads were singing—one dressed as a girl, the other as a boy—'If you were the only girl in the world,' and it was going famously. The balmy spring air suddenly became filled with an overpowering shriek. The Battalion also went famously. In record time the stage and the field were both deserted. We had an intense dislike of big shells."

On November 1st the companies of the 11th Essex left in the Potijze defences were relieved, the weather being so wet that working parties were busily employed upon dug-outs which had caved in. The situation became serious because the water in the Canal rose and the dug-outs were flooded, necessitating the removal of "A" Company into houses on the outskirts of Ypres. The Battalion moved back to "B" Camp near Poperinghe on November 5th, its place on Canal Bank not being occupied by another unit. The camp was, however, very wet and little better than the Canal Bank. Late on November 9th the 11th Essex marched to the railway siding on the Poperinghe-Ypres railway and were then taken to the outskirts of Ypres. They passed through the city to Potijze Wood, which was reached at 9.15 p.m. The Queen's Westminsters were relieved in trenches between Crump Farm and Warwick Trench. The weather was execrable

and several of the trenches were in such a condition that the men had to get out and walk along the parapet to maintain movements. Five casualties were suffered in one night from this cause. Warning was received of a possible attack on November 14th and the men were thinned out to mitigate the effects of bombardment. Nothing happened, but the next day a working party at a communication trench did not receive warning of a hostile aeroplane. They were caught by directed fire and lost eleven men in consequence. "Nice position," wrote an Essex officer, "slopping round trenches which we had only just come into at night and did not know our way about. Bombs had to be detonated, carriers made, ammunition looked into. It, however, came to nothing, as usual, but it was, nevertheless, very trying." Repair and drainage of trenches was the chief occupation. Under date November 12th, Captain D. C. Hasler wrote: "Rain, rain, rain. Everyone wet and miserable. Parapets, dug-outs, etc., collapsing wholesale. Hard, unremitting labour to keep the places about from falling about our heads and our communications from being blocked. Fleet Street is in an awful state. It proved to be one continual source of trouble all the time we were out. It was unrevetted and caved in on both sides. The drainage from the front went partly down this trench and any blockage stopped the flow of the water until it became knee to waist-deep. The continual passing to and fro of men trampled the earth until it became a mass of sticky mud, thigh deep, in which the passenger often stuck. Proud to say, we left communications intact, the only communicating trench with supports that survived. A drainage system was undertaken, which proved successful, except for the left flank, which was in a hole with high ground all round. Drainage in this part of the trench could only be obtained by skilled R.E.'s and an army of workers. The land hereabouts remained under water all the time. On our left was about 70 yards of unoccupied trench, which was impassable, and it was suggested that a breastwork should be constructed between ourselves and the Yorkshires. A bombing post at either end is unsatisfactory as a means of defence." There were daily casualties from shellfire. One private was shot dead through curiosity. He fired from one firestep and then went along to another to avoid the return shot, but alas! he looked over and a German sniper observed him. The German guns were active for the next few days and on November 18th the Battalion was glad to have marching orders for Poperinghe, from which place it was sent to Watou on November 20th. Billets were occupied in the various farms round about, with headquarters in the town. The Brigade was inspected by Sir Herbert Plumer on November 24th.

The Corps Commander, Lieut.-General Sir J. Keir, inspected the Battalion on December 2nd. Lieut. T. Gordon Murray

well remembers the day. "News of the intended visit of Sir John Keir," he wrote, "caused no end of commotion among company and platoon commanders. The General was reputed to be particularly keen about what may be called the internal economy of the platoon, and was expected to question the officers about rations. We were told that he would expect us to know what each man was entitled to in the varied items of diet, down to the fractions of an ounce of pepper and salt. Also, what weight of the various alternatives he should receive if the usual article was not available. For days there was a deal of 'swotting' of the equivalents of cheese in, say, jam or dates and so on. As far as I can remember, there was no cross-examination on these lines. We had been warned to carry on with our usual training, and when the General came to our company an officer was doing distance judging or something of that sort with his platoon. Sir John put him a catch question in tactics, and the puzzled officer at once called his platoon to attention and started them marching round and round the field. The General put a stop to this performance and called for an explanation. He was told, 'Well, sir, I didn't know what to do, but I thought it best to do something.'"

On December 8th the Essex were in Poperinghe again and supplied a working party. In this town they entrained on the 9th for the siding near Ypres Asylum, where they went into "billets"—half "B" Company at Burgomeister Farm, "A" Company at Kat Farm and the remainder, with headquarters, at Canal Bank. Rainy weather was again encountered, three-quarters of an inch falling on December 11th, so that it was a saddened Battalion which entrained at Asylum Siding *en route* for Poperinghe.

Rest came not, however, for the enemy started heavy shelling of the town on December 18th, which was part only of a great bombardment directed all along the Salient. The companies were immediately despatched by train to dug-outs along the railway. The embankment had been broken beyond Vlamertinghe by a huge shell, which made a gap about 30ft. across. In the early hours of Sunday, December 19th, the Battalion marched to Goldfish Chateau, where an officer was met who reported that the Germans had delivered a gas attack, the effect of which had been severely felt in Ypres and was sufficiently strong where the Essex men were to slightly affect their eyes. Three companies of the Battalion were distributed among the various dug-outs and trenches around the chateau, "A" Company suffering severely from a direct hit. "C" Company relieved a company of another unit on the ramparts at Menin Gate. Captain Hasler recalls that the Company arrived after an adventurous journey through Ypres, which was full of gas. They were coughing and spitting, with their eyes streaming; "feeling, in fact, jolly uncomfortable." Three platoons were stationed to the right of the gate and one to the left. The last-named had only just manned the position

when a shell fell into the middle of them, killing three and wounding ten, orders then being given for the survivors to return to cover behind the ramparts. This was also done in respect of the other three platoons because it was found that in case of alarm it would only take a minute to man the trenches. Lance-Corporals Smith and Holland did good work in removing the casualties. Although the shelling was severe, the only losses suffered were due to a direct hit on a dug-out, which pierced five feet of earth and timber and buried several men, four of whom were killed by the fall of the debris. The morning was clear and fine, with practically no wind, and enemy aeroplanes were very active. One officer went prowling round in the immediate vicinity of Menin Gate and came across some R.E.'s, with lots of provisions in a cellar. The men were very hungry by this time, so he persuaded the R.E.'s to let them have what they needed. Soon a party was down there collecting enough beef, biscuits and jam for the whole company. In the afternoon the Battalion retired by small parties to Poperinghe, the whole of the personnel reaching this town by 5 p.m. They had suffered 25 casualties. Corporal G. D. Chase recalls some of the grimmer memories of that night and day. "When the shelling commenced," he wrote, "the Battalion stood to and then we knew it was gas this time, and with a vengeance. Some were hurriedly marched by road into reserve on the Canal Bank, some by lorry and part on the train later. The Germans were using every calibre shell and the green clouds were penetrating as far back as Vlamertinghe. It was quite light as the train cautiously made its way up and the aeroplanes were very busy. One must have spotted the train, for shortly a sound that made the blood freeze came shrieking through the air. A huge shell just missed the train and exploded with terrible effect on the hop poles in the adjoining field. To make the situation worse, the train stood still. To our relief, we all got out then and deployed across the field, arriving at the Canal Bank." An amusing story of this period is that of Lieut. T. G. Murray, who recalls: "Some time before the second gas attack at Ypres, when the Battalion was at Poperinghe, an officer from each company was detailed to reconnoitre the trenches and strong posts between Vlamertinghe and Brielen in case the Battalion should have to man this area. The reconnaissance was on horseback. Burdett and Creasy could ride and had good mounts. Cross and I could not, and had pack ponies. Cross was on 'Little Tich,' but not for long, and so retired at the outset. I had 'Mrs. Lloyd George,' a very well-behaved animal. ('Little Tich,' by the way, achieved renown a good many months later by getting an inspecting Brigade commander—I won't say who—in a corner of the stable and trying to kick him). I owe 'Mrs. Lloyd George' a debt of gratitude—she could have done what she liked with me that day—and she brought me back safe, but sore. I bumped

up and down as we jogged along the roadside on the first part of our journey, but soon we turned into the open country. The other two started to enjoy themselves. They galloped over the rough ground, jumped trenches and so on, and wherever they went 'Mrs. Lloyd George' took me, clinging to reins and saddle. She was used to 'following' and just took me with her, occasionally suggesting that I was an encumbrance, but yet enduring me. Fortunately, she could jump and was sure-footed. We had just about finished our job and got to Brielen Village, when a certain amount of shrapnel came over. This had the effect of expediting our return. The others did not think it wise to dally by the way and set off down the roadside at a fast trot. My mount did not mean to be left behind—she was going home—shells were bursting behind. So her trot developed into a gallop, swerving round barbed wire barriers and shell-holes, causing me to lose my stirrups several times—and sway dangerously often—but I didn't quite fall off. Only pride prevented me from taking my meals off the mantelpiece for the next few days!"

Lieut. E. F. Jarvis relates an incident which illustrates how quickly shellfire became part of the routine. He says that early on the morning of December 20th Poperinghe was being shelled and the house opposite was hit. He deemed it wise to get up and found other officers waiting downstairs expecting a "stand to." Upon going upstairs again, however, he saw two of his colleagues, Murdoch and Burdett, in bed. The former grunted when informed of the alarming incident opposite, and Burdett asked if there were any instructions. Upon being informed in the negative he nestled down comfortably among the blankets, saying, "I'll turn my face to the street, so that if I am blown into it I shall see where I am going to." "I stroked my nose, pondering," adds Lieut. Jarvis, "what could I do? I did the only thing possible. I took my boots and tunic off and went to bed. I believe I was asleep before the shelling had finished."

The Battalion left Poperinghe on December 20th, but detrained at Vlamertinghe owing to the break in the railroad. The men, therefore, marched by road to Potijze in small bodies, suffering only one slight casualty, notwithstanding a mixed bombardment. The Essex went into the line at 6.30 p.m., in relief of the 14th Durham Light Infantry, their right resting on the Verlorenhoek-Ypres road. Two companies were in front, with a third in support and "C" in Kaaie Salient. Headquarters were in Potijze Wood. There was much gunfire on both sides. Lieut. Murdoch took out a patrol to investigate a German saphead on the night of December 21st and next day enemy shellfire knocked in the front parapet and buried several men. The British fire grew heavier and there was unrealized expectation that the Germans would retaliate. The line was thinned out and a platoon of "D" Company was brought to dug-outs near headquarters.

On Christmas Eve the Battalion was relieved and went into billets at Ypres, headquarters and "D" Company being located in the prison and the remainder on Canal Switch. Christmas Day was very wet and the dug-outs were so leaky that all ranks spent the festival in none too cheery a frame of mind. The next few days were passed in enduring heavy "strafing" and supplying working parties. One man was killed and two were mortally wounded by a shell which pitched in front of the prison. A heavy bombardment of Ypres was watched by an Essex officer, who saw six direct hits on the cathedral tower. The calibres ranged from 6in. to 15in. The last-named were most terrifying things, which made a row in the air like hundreds of express trains just about to fall on one's head. The burst was not very loud, but the quantity of earth that was moved was tremendous. The Battalion occupied the same section of trenches on December 29th, strengthened by a draft of 45. 2nd Lieut. Mudge patrolled a point in the enemy line and reported that the front trench was lightly held, but that the second line was more strongly garrisoned. On the last day of the year the War Diarist noted, "It was thought the enemy might strafe us as the New Year came in, but in front of our lines all was quiet." The officers of "C" Company enjoyed a gramophone entertainment in their dug-out and were quite cheery.

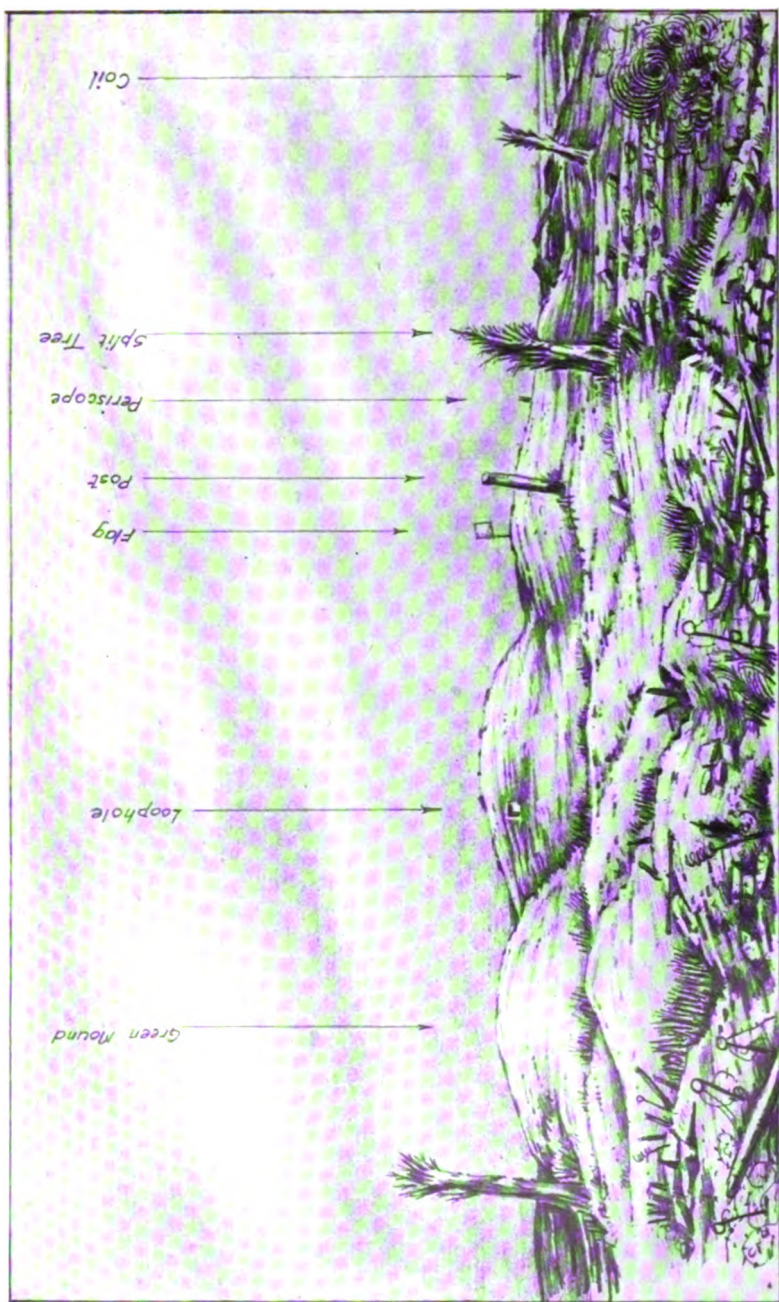
On New Year night Lieut. Mudge took out a patrol again in stormy weather and located a machine gun on the enemy's parapet. He and his men managed to get into a shell-hole 25 yards away, just on the outside of the wire. Sergeant Grant then threw a bomb which did not explode. The noise of its fall was, fortunately, not detected owing to the gale. The sergeant then threw another bomb, which appeared to burst on the gun; at any rate, it did not fire subsequently. The patrol had the satisfaction not only of all returning in safety, but of hearing the first bomb explode next day in the enemy's line. It blew in part of the machine gun emplacement and a working party thereon was fired upon and dispersed. January 3rd was the first fine clear day that had been enjoyed for a long time, but the next was dark and gloomy. Relief came that evening (January 4th). The tour in the trenches had been remarkably free from casualties. Water had been kept down by pumping and by keeping the drains in order. The front parapet had been rebuilt in several places and a firestep erected. "Haymarket," the only communication trench, was easy to walk along, but it afforded scant protection. It was a curious fact at Ypres that the depth of the Salient made the use of gas by the enemy dangerous to them, for there was always the danger of gas drifting right across and coming back to their own lines again. The wind had to be dead straight on to the trenches as well as of a suitable velocity before they could discharge it. Nevertheless, the troops knew that the cylinders were in readiness and they had to be constantly on the alert.

The 11th Essex were back again in the trenches on January 9th. The chief incidents of the stay were the difficulty in locating an enemy sniper, who wounded three men, and a shell burst which wounded six men of a working party in the Kaaie salient. Captain Hasler and Lieut. Creasy, of "C" Company, took out patrols. The former's party had an exciting experience. Their object was to examine a mound from fifty to one hundred yards in front of the enemy lines, south of Verlorenhoek road, with a trench leading up to it. They advanced very slowly and cautiously, examining old trenches and dug-outs as they went. The mound seemed to be deserted, though strongly wired, with a small portion which had been damaged by artillery. An entrance was effected there and as all seemed quiet a return was decided upon. Just as the party started back, however, four shots rang out and made them jump. The marksman, who was firing from a spot about 15 yards away from that which had been examined, could not have observed the investigators, however, and they returned safely after what was admittedly an anxious time. Lieut. Creasy's party, the next night, found the Germans in more active occupation of the mound. The Battalion went back to Ypres, where the headquarters and "D" Company were quartered in the prison, "B" Company in the ramparts and the remainder in Canal Switch. Whilst there a Communion service was held in a cellar at the prison. A draft of 50 other ranks was received on January 18th, the day before the Battalion went back to its old place in the line. There, on the 22nd, they had a noisy day, for a score of whizz-bangs came over and blew the tops off three rifles. The sniping system was much improved and the trenches were repaired exceptionally well, because the weather was fine and the shelling weak. The mound was again patrolled, but no additional information gained. The three machine guns and the same old sentry groups were still there. Much interest was taken in an enemy transport train, which was observed on several occasions, whilst the mysterious night journeys of an aeroplane were also noted.

"January 23rd must have been one of the curious days of the war," wrote an officer. "The morning was very misty, so that it was impossible to see across 'No Man's Land.' Every available man was, therefore, sent out in front of our parapet and got busy adding to the barbed wire entanglements. Listening posts were sent out in front to guard against a surprise attack, but as not a shot was fired, we must presume that the Germans were doing the same thing. This, I suppose, was pretty general along a good part of the front, so we have the amusing picture of the two armies out in 'No Man's Land,' with only the mist to protect them and both ready to drop back into their trenches the moment it showed signs of lifting."

RAID ON THE MOUND.

A minor, but very well organized, enterprise was carried out on the night of January 24th, 1916, which had the twofold object of establishing identification and causing casualties, for it was hoped that a surprise would be effected. There were two parties and the objective was the mound before mentioned. "A," commanded by Captain D. C. Hasler, consisted of Lieut. H. W. H. Creasy and five other ranks. Two of the latter were armed with rifles, with fixed bayonets (smoked) and hand-grenades, whilst two others carried knobkerries and grenades. The fifth man, a bomber, had a mat for crossing the wire. "B" party comprised 2nd Lieut. J. S. Scott, Sergeant Skellam, a corporal and three men. They were to act as reserve. Upon a dark, moonless, misty night, both parties, with blackened faces, left the trenches at 6.45 p.m., "looking a cross between nigger minstrels and Gurkhas," as one officer had it. A man of the reserve party was left at the gap in the wire to guide the raiders on the return journey. White tape was reeled out as the men went forward. A machine gun was placed so that it could fire upon the mound and trenches to the north and cover retirement upon a lamp signal being given. The latter was not received, so that nothing was done. Great care had been taken in organizing the raid. The details had been carefully thought over and the men constantly practised when the Battalion was in Canal Switch. In addition, the Mound was patrolled for several nights in succession, so that the ground was familiar to all those engaged on the enterprise. A final reconnaissance was held the night before, when the gap in the wire which was to be entered was decided upon. Upon the night of the raid, the assailants moved out in single file; Party "B" to the rear flank. About thirty yards from the wire an incident occurred which threatened failure. One of the party thought he saw a German on his flank and immediately stalked the supposed enemy, followed by his officer, but the alarm proved to be without foundation and the party re-formed and moved as rapidly as Very lights permitted across the Stables. They arrived safely under cover of the bank which ran north from the Stables to the Mound, where a halt was called to correct formation. After a short pause, Party "A" crept towards the enemy trench. They found on arrival at the end of the bank that the way was barred by thick crinolined barbed wire. They crawled round it to the place where entry had been decided upon because the wiring was weak. The mat was brought forward and unrolled, the party being anxiously concerned as to whether the movement and the creaking of the wire would give the alarm. Two shots came very close to the raiders and, as this might indicate that they had been discovered, it was decided to crawl back to the shelter of the bank and await events. Several pistol lights went up and it was a marvel to the waiting men that



The Mound as seen from 11th Essex Trenches,
 Drawn from Sketch supplied by Major D. C. Hasler,

[D. H. Burles,

the unrolling of the mat and its presence on the wire were not detected. After a while things quietened down and though by this time Party "B" had got out of touch, Party "A" went forward again, crawled over the wire and then re-formed on the other side, making what seemed to them to be a lot of noise. Captain Hasler went along the parapet to a loophole—a space between two plates through which a rifle and bayonet were poking. He pulled it gently and the action was immediately followed by a hurried scuttling. Two Germans ran off as hard as they could to the main trench, their feet ringing on the trench boards. The raiders found that the enemy had been sitting under a sort of corrugated iron shelter. The plates were pulled out in the hope that something further would be discovered. Further surprise was now impossible, so the party dashed along the parapet for about thirty yards, when another German, calling "Mister," "Mister," was shot. Immediately the trench seemed to fill with the enemy and there was much hurried shooting at them. This caused them to disappear as rapidly as they had come. Very lights went up in quick succession and rifle and machine gun fire was incessant. No more could be done and Captain Hasler gave the signal for return, which was safely accomplished. When back in the British line the raiders heard the Germans bombing their own trench, which, as one of the former caustically observed, "they doubtless retook without further casualty." The operation was carried through without a single casualty and the enemy lost at least four killed. Captain Hasler was struck with the speed the enemy disappeared. He never saw men move more quickly. One man hauled a wounded man away out of a 6ft. trench, through barbed wire, and then for a hundred yards under a hail of bullets and Very lights. Previous reconnaissance had led the raiders to suppose the trench was lightly held by one or two listening posts of three men and a corporal, whereas at least 15 to 20 men appeared when roused. Some effort might have been made to secure papers from the bodies of the killed men, but that would probably have caused a delay which would have been fatal to the party. A most extraordinary fact was that the raiders were even able to penetrate the wire, as a great deal of noise was made. The behaviour of all ranks was splendid, particularly those who entered the trench. Lieut. Creasy did magnificent work. The mat, 3ft. by 12ft., was made of canvas, with sticks placed across and rolled from either end towards the centre, so that the ends would go either way when thrown upon the wire. The Germans took two days to remove it.

The Battalion went out of the line on January 25th, leaving the trenches in a much improved condition. The rest at Poperinghe was short and it was back on January 30th. During this tour the trenches were taken over by the 71st Brigade and another section was occupied, the left being on Warwick Lane and the

right on Duke Street. Two platoons of "A" Company were sent to Kaaie Salient. February 2nd was a noisy day, with the added anxiety that the wind just suited for a gas attack, which, happily, never came. A hostile shell struck a trench mortar on February 4th, which had been firing with effect upon "The Mound." Two of the bays were knocked in, one man of the Essex being killed and two of the mortar battery wounded. Two platoons of "B" Company relieved the Queen's Westminsters in Potijze Defences. The next day another two bays were destroyed. During the stay the parapet was raised and parados built in the new trenches, whilst dug-outs were constructed and the signalling system adapted. Casualties, notwithstanding heavy bombardment, were light, the weather fine and the trenches free of water. The Battalion was not sorry, on February 5th, to leave the front line and return to Ypres, "A" Company being in Canal Switch, "D" on the Ramparts near Menin Gate, "C" Company on the Canal Bank and "D" Company at the Prison, with headquarters on the Canal Bank, near "Dead End." Lieut. Creasy brought two ferrets on returning from leave and there was great sport with rats. Thirty were secured in one bag. On February 10th the Essex went up to the front again, headquarters being in Potijze Wood. On February 12th there was a gas alarm. Thick smoke drifted into the wire. Helmets were donned and the smoke floated between the lines. There was no attack, but a considerable amount of shelling, to which there was vehement reply. The Battalion sustained six casualties. There was much activity on both sides, enemy shelling during the day and machine gun fire on the wire at night. Working and carrying parties did not come up on several nights, and as there were no R.E.'s at the Dump, "C" Company took the opportunity of sending down a party at midnight during a lull in the strafe and brought away a fine haul of trench boards, sandbags, etc., for use in their sector. "About this period we had snow for three weeks," wrote Lieut. T. G. Murray, "and the men suffered much from cold. Every effort was made to keep the feet in condition by the frequent use of anti-frost-bite grease. Fur coats were issued and, although they provoked much merriment, were a great comfort. I have grateful memories of a fine old sergeant (Prettige). He may not have been a great 'fire-eater,' but he was a very useful man for trench warfare, and knew how to keep his men busy building dug-out shelters and repairing the trenches. I can hear him now calling, 'Keep yer 'ead down, sir,' as I passed a danger spot, and well remember the drop of sergeants' tea I got from him when it was a great help. (Sergeants' tea generally was amplified with a tot of rum)."

During the short rest in Poperinghe officers and sergeants played a football match, for which the latter thoughtfully and ostentatiously brought a stretcher in order to put the "wind up"

their opponents. The officers' mess was hilarious with the story of a subaltern back from leave. It was the practice of the A.M.L.O. to detain junior officers for duty when the train arrived at Boulogne, for the purpose of marching parties of men to the rest camps and taking them to the leave boat on the following day. The officer in question was wearing a burberry without rank badges and when warned for duty immediately drew himself up and said, "Aren't there sufficient subalterns?" The A.M.L.O. saluted and begged his pardon, for the officer had spent many years farming in South Africa and his weather-beaten appearance made it seem as though he should hold higher rank than that of a lieutenant. Here is a graphic description of a company officers' mess, deep down in a cellar, supplied by Lieut. E. F. Jarvis. "It is about 20ft. square and about 5ft. 9in. high. The roof is arched and the house is not yet demolished, so we are really very safe. All round the walls are concrete partitions about 1½ft. deep, leaving an alcove about 8ft. wide. Into one of these alcoves a fireplace has been fitted and the smoke issues through a hole in the roof into the room above. The smoke is dispersed to a large extent before it goes into the open-air through large glassless windows, so there is very little chance of aircraft being attracted by it. In the cellar we have a nice carpet. The brick part of the fireplace is covered by a piece of velvet over which hangs a framed picture—very saucy—from 'La Vie Parisienne.' There are two pillars now covered with a very pretty red wallpaper. Between the two said pillars stands a fine old oak table covered with a piece of oiled canvas. A large curtain is suspended to cut off the draught from the open entrance. I have improved upon the entrance and hope to fix up a wooden partition with a glass top. Glass is hard to find, but one comes across an occasional picture which can be used effectively. We have two most handsome lounges, one large easy chair and several small ones, mostly with padded seats. Large overmantels and mirrors abound, all helping to reflect light. A writing table and two good-sized occasional tables, two small sideboards, a hat stand and a group of plants at the entrance complete the larger articles of furniture."

The Battalion was in the Potijze area again on February 20th. Lieut. Scott took out a patrol to reconnoitre the wire, but found the enemy alert. Another patrol, led by 2nd Lieut. Bailey, went out on the snowy ground of February 22nd to capture a German, but again he returned without result, for the enemy kept well to the shelter of his own trenches. On the night of February 23rd the Germans were heard cheering and firing volleys, whilst the noise of a train was distinctly borne upon the night air, but it could not be located. A platoon of "A" Company (2nd Lieut. Mair) took over a trench on the right between Duke Street and Jermyn Street. Constant snowfall made the work of the transport very difficult and the Battalion

was glad to go back to billets in Ypres on February 25th, when the snow changed to rain. A draft of 86 men joined.

Snowy weather continued when the Essex went to the Potijze line again on March 1st. Early next day they gave ten minutes' rapid fire in association with the attack at St. Eloi. They were in and out of the line in conjunction with the 14th Durham Light Infantry for the next fortnight. A heavy fall on the night of the 3rd-4th flooded the front line trenches and impeded the work of the night patrols. A strong patrol, consisting of Captain Bartlett, Lieut. Green and 23 other ranks, went raiding on the early morning of March 14th and killed one and wounded others of the Germans. They brought back one of the latter, belonging to the 233rd Regiment, which was not known to be in the area. There was some loss from sniping, Sergeant Evans and Private Coleman being killed. Perhaps to this time belongs the story of a new duckboard, spotless, outside the dug-out door. Upon it was a goodly spread, the contents of a recently arrived parcel. Salmon—pineapple—cake—cheese (lactic, not ration)—and a dixie or two of steaming tea. The sector had been quiet of late. The festive board was ready. The company inside was about to emerge, but hastily retired again—a direct hit had caused the board and its delectable contents to disappear far more quickly even than hungry soldiers could have contrived! The Guards Division took over on the 16th-18th and on March 26th the Brigade was at Beaumarais Camp, Calais, for the second rest period.

There was a clothing parade, which caused Lieut. E. F. Jarvis to write that it was as good as going to a pantomime: Scene—A row of, say, eight men before the Quartermaster. Q.M.: "Anybody for 'ats?" "Yes, sir." A dingy hat is offered for inspection; signs of long and continuous wear are apparent. Q.M. looks doubtful. "Anyone can see you're a careful sort of fellar." "I've 'ad it ever since I came aht with th' original battalion, sir. Never 'ad another, sir." "I don't mind if you've only 'ad one all the time or only last week. If it's wore out, then I'll give you another." After some expostulation and more talk the man is sometimes offered a waterproof cover which will hide the majority of the grease spots and dirt. If I think the man is being badly treated I interfere. I get on with the Q.M. very well really and manage to get most of what I want by humouring him. Another scene. The same (or similar) row of men. Q.M.: "Now, listen to me. Anyone 'ere for putties?" A man presents a pair of putties burnt in one or more places, but otherwise in good condition. Q.M.: "Aha, burnt—now you're the man I'm looking for. 'Ow did yer come to do that? If I *do* change 'em, I shall 'ave to charge yer quarter value—that's the least I can charge yer." "Left my putties drying by a brayjer (brazier) in my dug-aht when I was called away on juty. Sir, when I comes back they was burnt." A pause. "Aha—well, my boy, that word duty saved you. But, mind (impressively), I *can't* do it again."

Here, again, is the delicious story of an officer who had his first horse riding lesson. He did not come off, but was the cause of much laughter. Presently he noticed one of the grooms who was doubled up with amusement and asked him the reason of his mirth. "Laughing at the horse, sir," was the brilliantly improvised reply. A sports meeting was arranged on Calais sands, honoured by the presence of the Brigadier, also the "young lady from the Y.M.C.A." An interesting item was the race for officers' chargers and pack ponies. Nobody knew who won—but the hero of the event was the pack pony "Little Tich," who threw his rider at the start and galloped out to sea with his saddle under his belly. A coursing event for the dogs provoked great interest. One of the men had trapped a hare and brought it in a sack. Somebody started to make a "book"—and the favourites seemed to be Brennan's "Gib" and Bartlett's "Gip." The course was cleared and excitement was at its height. The dogs were ready and when the man with the sack was given the word, he opened and shook it and out fell the wretched hare—dead!

The Battalion started its march to the Salient again on April 5th, via Zutkerque, Merckeghem and Wormhoudt, until it reached Camp L6, on the Poperinghe-Elverdinghe road, moving on April 18th to Pallisier Farm. The next day Brig.-General Bridgford, of the 18th Brigade, was injured by a fall and Colonel Hobkirk took over temporary command of the Brigade, Captain Gulliland assuming control of the Battalion. Fighting was proceeding on the front, trenches being taken and retaken, but the 11th Essex were not closely involved. It was not until April 22nd that they went into the line about Spahi Farm and Lancashire Farm, where, on the following day, "B" Company suffered much from trench mortar and aerial torpedo fire, losing five killed and 25 wounded. On April 27th the Battalion went into dug-outs on the Canal Bank. The Battalion was in and out of the line hereabouts during the whole of May, during which period 380 men reported for duty in three drafts. At the beginning of June Colonel Hobkirk left for a short time to act as brigadier of the 21st Brigade and Captain H. B. Harris took over temporary command, followed later by Major H. W. Green, of the Buffs. The Battalion stood-to on June 6th on account of the fighting about Hooze, in which the Canadians were engaged. At that time (June 7th) the 10th Essex were in the vicinity of Elverdinghe Chateau. The weather was very wet and the Battalion suffered great loss in the death of Captain Harry William Hay Creasy, commanding "C" Company, who was killed by the explosion of a "blind" German trench mortar bomb which he was examining. He was buried on the night of June 13th at Essex Farm. When the Guards took over on June 16th the Battalion marched to Poperinghe and the next day to Houtkerque, the men's feet, soft after ten days of trench routine in gumboots, being sorely tried by the pavé roads.

LIEUT.-COLONEL F. G. SPRING TAKES COMMAND.

The 11th Essex had a short stay in Merckeghem, from 19th June to 1st July, where Major F. G. Spring, of the Lincolnshires, took over command and commenced a most notable period of service, of which, years later, officers and men were wont to speak with enthusiasm. A Staff College man, it would not have been surprising if he had had a small opinion of the amateurs who officered his battalion, but, on the contrary, he displayed a healthy view that the infantry subaltern was doing the big job of the war. On duty there was no mistaking his soldierly qualities and command. He never gave a second chance to a failure, but in times of relaxation he was full of fun and hail fellow well met with the most callow second-lieutenant who did his best. A great leg-puller, his teasing was in such good humour that it became almost a privilege to be the object of his chaff. Some he teased because they were long and some because they were short; some because they were married, some because they were not; always in a real spirit of fun. Among the special victims of his "ragging" were "Doc." Ronaldson and Featherstonehaugh ("Feathers"), both of whom he teased unmercifully. Then when Moore was sniping officer and Kempston had the sappers, he loved to call them up from a dug-out to see the "long and short of it" appear together. Moreover, his officers and men knew that when he asked them to go into danger he went with them as far as he was allowed—and that when it came to rest billets his inventive mind was all the time actively engaged in schemes for their comfort and to avoid as much of the irksomeness of red tape as discipline would permit. At Trones Wood the Essex were in bivouac, having just come out from a pretty unpleasant time. But the Colonel refused to be either tired or depressed and, sitting on a box under a canvas shelter in the dim candle light, he seemed more like a big boy playing at war as he roared with laughter on the slightest excuse or lack of it. Indeed, some staff officers seeking the Battalion out in the darkness found their way by the Colonel's laugh. The appreciation was mutual, for Colonel Spring subsequently made this entry in his diary: "My first impressions of the Battalion were that it was full of splendid material. Officers were keen and out to work for me; the men of the same type as in my own regiment (Lincolnshire), and the more I saw of them delighted me. I felt that whatever one asked the Battalion to do would be done and if one failed the responsibility would be mine. The training of the officers could be improved upon and certain individuals would have to go. A young and virile Battalion like this had need of the best officers and N.C.O.'s we could get. I put down these first impressions, as I did not alter my opinion later on."

By July 2nd the Battalion was at camp M on the Poperinghe-Proven road, the weather being very hot. Lord Cavan,



BRIGADIER F. G. SPRING, C.M.G., D.S.O.

commanding XIV Corps, inspected the 11th Essex on July 4th and two days later an order was received for the 6th Division to be held in readiness to move at 24 hours' notice from midnight, apparently for the Somme area, but it was cancelled twenty-four hours later. Training was vigorously interspersed with sports until the Battalion went to the Asylum, Ypres, on July 14th and next day was again in familiar surroundings in the Potijze sector. Whilst there information was received that Captain John Hutchison Gulliland, attached to the staff of 16th Brigade, had died of wounds on July 17th and two days later 2nd Lieut. Hugh Wilmot Wilkinson was shot through the head whilst looking over the parapet just after stand down. The Battalion went back to Ypres on July 19th and by the end of the month, after much work on the Canal Bank, the Essex had settled down in billets in Wormhoudt. Then came orders for the Division to move to the Somme. The Battalion left Esquelbecq station at 1.20 a.m. on August 3rd, detrained at Doullens, marched to Acheux and camped in the wood, later relieving the 1st Wiltshires in Mailly-Maillet Wood. During this period Lieut. Duke became Adjutant, taking over from Major Read, who became second-in-command.

BATTLES OF THE SOMME, 1916.

The 11th Essex were relieved by 2nd York and Lancasters at Mailly-Maillet, on August 9th, and went to Acheux Wood in hot and dry weather. On August 12th they took over the line from the 2nd D.L.I., with their right at the Mill on the River Ancre and Battalion headquarters just east of Hamel. The Mill was to the right of the Corps and could only be relieved at night. The Durhams had left their party in it and Colonel Spring relates: "About 9 p.m. Bartlett, who was commanding our right company, came to Battalion headquarters and reported that his relief had gone out, but, as there was no sign of the D.L.I., it had come back, and he believed that the Germans were in the Mill. I told him to send a larger party under an officer and turn them out and went down to see what happened. This he did and found the D.L.I. in occupation of the Mill. What had happened was that the D.L.I. had shut themselves up in the Mill and some Germans had crept up in the morning mist and thrown bombs into it, wounding some of the garrison. We changed these dispositions and always kept our men out and around the Mill until it was light enough for the sentries inside to see anyone approaching. I well remember the Mill that evening. The whole area throbbled with excitement. There was cover close up to it and our men were on the *qui vive* at every likely point of approach waiting to stick a German. We had this cover down before morning. The story of the place was like a novel; it seemed to belong one day to the Germans and then to us. The number of messages received from the bigwigs showed it was a source of anxiety. However, during our tour there we had no unfortunate incident."

Listening posts were put out to guard the garrison from surprise and visiting patrols were sent out at intervals during the night from the main trench. Telephonic communication between Mill Post and company headquarters was arranged, and also lamp signalling between the Post and a part of our trench known as "The Picturedrome." "In the course of making signal arrangements I had to be around Mill Post several nights," wrote Lieut. T. G. Murray, "and on my way out called on Captain Bartlett, O.C. 'A' Company (who held this part of the line) for the password. The first night he said, 'Wine,' the second, 'Women,' the third, 'Song.' I wondered what it would be on the fourth evening, but he suited the action to the word on this occasion by pushing a bottle across the dug-out table and saying, 'Port—have some?'"

"On our right was the German stronghold of Thiepval and at one point the snipers could do good work with rifles fitted with telescopic sights. They had sport with one corner of enemy trench,

where they could just see the Germans as they passed a gap in the parapet. Then, to their disgust, our artillery landed a shell on that bit of trench, and the enemy, in repairing the damage, made the parapet higher, so that their movements could no longer be observed."

One of the features of the Hamel sector was the activity of trench mortars on either side. The British fired from pits in an orchard on the hillside. Apples were still on the trees and were coated with powder from the explosive used in discharging the mortars.

"This was the first time," wrote Colonel Spring, "I saw the enemy small trench mortar functioning—a horrible thing. I remember one night being in a communication trench with my orderly, Cole, when the Germans fairly inundated the place all round us—a most unpleasant walk. Shortly after taking over I was ordered to carry out a raid; all the company commanders told me it was doomed to fail, so I spent most of one night crawling about outside our wire trying to find a place. However, as we were close to the Germans, who had wire and overlooked our trenches, I felt no raid could succeed and I did not do it. This raid was, nevertheless, attempted by another Battalion, which failed, losing heavily."

The 2nd Durham Light Infantry had a hectic experience when a large working party came up to dig a new trench connecting Gordon Trench and Picturedrome Post. They had only just started digging when they were showered with trench mortars, rifle grenades and shells. The men stopped working for a time and then made another attempt, but were again shelled. The Durhams sustained forty casualties that night. The Essex were unfortunate on August 19th, when one of the British heavy trench mortar bombs dropped short into the trench, killing three (including two sergeants) and wounding three. The Battalion was glad to be relieved on August 20th, but life in support had abundant risks, for a working party out on the night of the 21st had five killed and 11 wounded by an enemy trench mortar. On August 26th the Battalion marched to Bertrancourt, then on the following day in the rain to Amplier, the next day to Gezaincourt, where it was billeted in the village barns, and then to Candas, the weather still being very wet. All ranks were trained in the use of the Lewis gun, bombing, assault and aeroplane communication. On September 6th the Brigade was on the move again, this time to Rainneville, then to Sailly-le-Sec, where again there was training in trench and wood fighting. On September 11th yet another transfer was made to Meaulte, and then on to Citadel Camp, partly by way of country tracks. "On our way up to the Somme battle," wrote an Essex officer, "we passed through the Mametz-Fricourt area and here, at the 'Happy Valley' camp, I met a friend in the Queen Victoria's Rifles. They had just come out of the fight, so I asked him what things

were like. He said it was bad enough up in front, but to him the worst had been going up and coming back. I was soon to know what this meant. There had been fierce fighting round the Briqueterie, Trones Wood, etc., and there were many bodies still lying about. One sunken road in particular was literally full of dead in various stages of decomposition. The sight was bad and the stench was worse. I well remember the night we went up ready to go into the battle next day. There were, of course, hardly any dug-outs, none really available for the wretched infantry, but some of us found an empty one and took possession. It was just two rough caves hewn out of the hillside, with a narrow tunnel between. I got into the tunnel and, lying down on the rough chalky floor, tried to sleep. After a while some R.A.M.C. fellows came in and claimed the place. The others, protesting, cleared out into the wet night, but I lay doggo and pretended to be asleep, just to be allowed to stay in that uncomfortable, draughty spot. What we do when we feel thoroughly tired and miserable ! ”

On September 14th the Brigade was at a camp near Montauban and moved that evening to the assembly ground, Maltz Horn Farm, near Guillemont. The Brigade was in reserve for a big operation, which included the seizure of the Quadrilateral.

When the 6th Division moved to the Somme, it was attached to the XIV Corps, Fourth Army (Lord Cavan), which was on the right of the line, and had been engaged in fierce fighting for a month past. It was well into September, however, before the Division was actively employed. “On September 9th a successful attack had given us Ginchy and Leuze Wood, but the Germans were holding very strongly the high ground which lies in the form of a horseshoe between the above-named points, and which dominates the country for some distance to the south. The trenches followed the shape of the spur roughly at the back end of the horseshoe, and covered access was given to them by a sunken road leading back to the deep valley which runs north from Combles. At the top of the spur, just south of the railway and communicating with the sunken road, was a four-sided trench in the form of a parallelogram of some 300 yards by 150 yards, called by us the Quadrilateral. It was this strong point and the adjoining trenches which had held up the advance of the Fourth Army on the 9th September and it was the first task of the 6th Division to obliterate the horseshoe and straighten the line preparatory to a general attack on the 15th September. On the 12th September attacks by the 56th Division on the south and the Guards on the north reduced the neck and the horseshoe, or pocket, to about 500 yards, but could not close it. The situation within the horseshoe was undefined and the exact positions of the Quadrilateral and other trenches were not known, owing to the bad flying weather. Even our own positions were in doubt, as almost every vestige of roads, railways and even villages

had disappeared under the continuous bombardments." The 71st Brigade went into the line on the night of 11th-12th September preparatory to making an endeavour to capture the Quadrilateral on September 18th. The attack was not as successful as was hoped, but, nevertheless, an advance of 500 yards was made north of the railway, though south of the line the progress was not so marked. The casualties were very heavy. Later on the same day another effort succeeded in getting to within about 250 yards of the Strong Point and establishing touch on the right with the 16th Brigade. The taking of the Quadrilateral was included in the general attack planned for September 15th, which extended from Gueudecourt, Flers and Lesbœufs to Morval. The two latter points were the special concern of the Guards and the 6th Division. Tanks were used for the first time and the experience of the 6th Division was not a happy one. Two broke down before starting and the third—with periscope shot off, peepholes blinded and riddled by armour piercing bullets—had to come back again. To enable the tanks to pass through, however, the barrage did not cover a gap of about 200 yards, which faced what was afterwards discovered to be the strongest point of the Quadrilateral. The 16th Brigade carried out their task with the utmost pluck, but they suffered mercilessly from hostile fire when moving up the smooth slopes of this field fortress, the barrage having by this time passed on. The 71st Brigade on the north had equal difficulty, but, nevertheless, both brigades were close to the enemy's wire when the attack came to a stop. It was thought that the Guards were in Lesbœufs, but it was later ascertained it was Flers which had been taken. To bring the 6th Division into line, a night attack was made upon the flanks of the Quadrilateral by the 2nd Durham Light Infantry and 11th Essex, of the 18th Brigade, but it had not the success which was hoped. The "History of the 6th Division" states that the 11th Essex lost direction and returned, but this view is strenuously combated by Colonel Spring. He urged that even the C.O.'s of the battalions of the 16th Brigade who had been attacking all day did not know where the Quadrilateral was beyond the fact that the trench in which they were was believed to lead towards it; further, that misleading information was given regarding Bouleaux Wood; that, in fact, the Battalion was assigned a hopeless task. His views will be given at length when the part played by the 11th Essex on this night is narrated in detail. Preparations were again made to take the Quadrilateral by the fresh battalions of the 18th Brigade. Whilst the York and Lancasters bombed a trench leading from Leuze Wood, the West Yorkshires and 14th Durhams, moving to the north-west and west, quickly possessed themselves of the stubborn Quadrilateral, seizing nine machine guns and 160 prisoners. The taking of this celebrated strong point cost the Division

3,500 casualties. The way was opened to Morval and Lesbœufs and for the purpose of having a share in their capture the Division came into the line again on September 21st, their positions being a portion of a main German trench, the flanks of which were still held by the enemy. This mixture of responsibility led to several mistakes by German ration parties, who stumbled across the British portion of the trench and fled hurriedly, not always without loss. The enemy attacked in some strength on September 24th, but were beaten off. The next day the Division moved forward to take the ground between the northern end of Morval and the road passing through the centre of Lesbœufs. Both the 16th and 18th Brigades secured all their objectives, capturing 500 prisoners, six machine guns and four heavy trench mortars from the 52nd German Division, 26th Reserve Corps, with whom the Division had already become acquainted in the Salient. The struggle was carried on for a time by other divisions, who sought to secure the high ground overlooking the Bapaume-Le Transloy road and it was not until October 12th that the 6th Division again went to the front, this time in an endeavour to take the line of trenches running north from Le Transloy, which had become a salient. All three brigades of the Division were employed, but they were only partially successful. "The failure to make ground, which was general all along the British front, was attributed to want of surprise, as we had bombarded the position for two days and always attacked in the early afternoon. Further, the ground was very heavy and observation extremely bad. The Germans were fresh troops and fought well. Perhaps more than anything it was due to the effect of their machine gun fire. Taught by our creeping barrage that machine guns in the front line were useless, the enemy had drawn them across the valley towards the road and caught our advance over the brow of the rise with accurate distant machine gun fire." On October 15th the 2nd Durham Light Infantry and 11th Essex (18th Brigade) had little success in their attempt upon portions of Cloudy and Mild trenches, but the Sherwood Foresters seized some gunpits which lay about 200 yards in front of their line. The last attempt on October 18th by the 9th Norfolks had no better fate. On October 20th the Division was attached to the First Army, with headquarters at Bethune, having suffered the loss of 277 officers and 6,640 other ranks in its tour of duty on the Somme.

ATTACK ON THE QUADRILATERAL.

The part played by the 11th Essex on 15th September is graphically told by Colonel Spring: "When in the dim light of the morning we saw cavalry and tanks pushing off, we thought we were at last off to Berlin. This was the first time the tanks had been used. Zero hour was in the early morning and the attack of the 6th Division was carried out by the 16th and 71st Infantry Brigades, the 18th Infantry Brigade being in divisional



Air photograph showing Leuze Wood, September, 1916. The North-Eastern portion was known as Boulevard Wood.
(Imperial War Museum, Crown Copyright).

reserve. About 2.30 p.m., as far as I can remember, I was sent for from Brigade headquarters, and on arrival there found that Lieut.-Colonel Irvine, commanding 2nd Durham Light Infantry, had also been sent for. The Brigadier was away at divisional headquarters, and on his return we were told that the divisional attack had been held up by the Quadrilateral and that the Durham Light Infantry and Essex were to carry out an operation at dusk to capture it. The divisional commander would not send in a fresh attack over the same ground as the attack had been made in the morning, for the ground was strewn with our wounded, and the artillery, covering any new attack, would lay all these poor fellows out. The new plan was for two battalions to advance at dusk—the Durham Light Infantry from the north of the railway, which necessitated their moving into the Guards' area and having a long way to go; the Essex from the direction of Leuze Wood, moving north. By the time we had received our orders Colonel Irvine and I both realized we had barely time to carry out our reconnaissance and get our battalions into their assembly positions; in fact, I am now quite sure the Durham Light Infantry could not possibly have done it in the time given us. We were both given a definite time to push off about dusk. I ran back to Battalion headquarters and took the company commanders (Bartlett and Scott) whom I had selected to carry out the attack, Murray and my orderly (Cole) with me, after telling the next senior to bring on the Battalion towards Leuze Wood. We ran practically continuously until we found the headquarters of the 16th Brigade, and as they could not give us any definite information as to the exact location of the Quadrilateral, the Brigade Major (Denison Pender) came along to show us where the joint headquarters of the advanced battalions was. We went to the road junction at the north-west corner of Leuze Wood and then got into a shallow trench in which were numbers of our dead and wounded. Leuze Wood, in which the Brigadier had suggested we should assemble, was being continuously shelled with heavies, so to assemble there was out of the question. We struggled along this narrow trench, being sniped whenever we looked up, and eventually came to a dug-out. Here I found the headquarters of two or three battalions; one of the C.O.'s came up and to my enquiries said they did not know exactly where the Quadrilateral was, but believed that the trench we were in led up to it; the ground was all cut up and it was impossible to carry out any thorough reconnaissance, as we were under incessant rifle and automatic fire. The C.O. on the spot seemed to think it was madness to send us on, and if we had not been acting in conjunction with the Durham Light Infantry I would not have attacked. As it was, if we did not, we might let this battalion down and in the limited time we had it was impossible to get in touch with them. The only plan which I could formulate which had any chance of succeeding was for each company to assemble along the northern edge of

Leuze Wood and the left of the left company to move along the trench which led towards the Quadrilateral. I had been given a map showing information reported by our air people, which marked our troops in possession of Leuze and most of Bouleaux Wood; this information proved wrong as regards Bouleaux Wood, as when the attack had progressed German Very lights went up from this Wood and fire was poured into the backs of our men. Having given my orders to Bartlett and Scott, we went back and waited for the Battalion, the two leading companies not coming up till zero hour was drawing nigh. Both companies went off, led by Bartlett and Scott, who had very little time to explain the situation. I accompanied them to the N.E. edge of Leuze Wood and there waited for the rest of the Battalion. The advance started satisfactorily and in the dusk we were not seen from the Quadrilateral. After a short time, however, the enemy in Bouleaux Wood spotted us and fire broke out as I have mentioned above, and then from the direction of the Quadrilateral. As there were no signs of the rest of the Battalion, I sent off my orderly to find them and found myself entirely alone until a young subaltern of the K.S.L.I. came up. The place where we were was most unhealthy, being shelled every few moments, so we moved back fifty yards or so. Just after we left a shell pitched straight on the spot where we had been standing. I then got news that the rest of the Battalion had arrived; they had been delayed because they had been observed by German aeroplanes. I went back, established our Battalion headquarters in a small quarry, and got the men into some old trenches. An officer's patrol was then sent out to gain some news of the attack and after a considerable time I heard that it had failed, with heavy casualties, poor Bartlett being among those killed. I sent orders for the survivors to withdraw on to the rest of the Battalion. In the middle of the night orders came from Brigade to move back to Maltzhorn. These orders arrived simultaneously with a shell, so we were not sorry to obey." The Battalion suffered the loss of one hundred, of whom twenty were killed. The officers who died were Captain Herbert Claude Bartlett, M.C., Captain Michael William Annesley Macmichael and 2nd Lieut. Lidington.

Another aspect of that day's experiences is given by Lieut. T. G. Murray. "The Battalion came along in small parties and assembled in a valley running up towards Leuze Wood. Here, as bad luck would have it, was also a considerable body of cavalry, waiting, as usual, to 'go through.' An enemy aeroplane came over very low, spotted them and us and went off again. In a few minutes heavy shelling commenced. Some person unknown shouted 'Scatter'—and soon the valley was full of a stampede. Duke (the Adjutant) ran down one side and I down the other. We managed to stop the run, but the whole affair was very demoralizing. A group who found shelter in a small quarry place in the hillside had a wonderful escape. A shell fell right

among them. The concussion knocked them over in all directions, but no one was hurt."

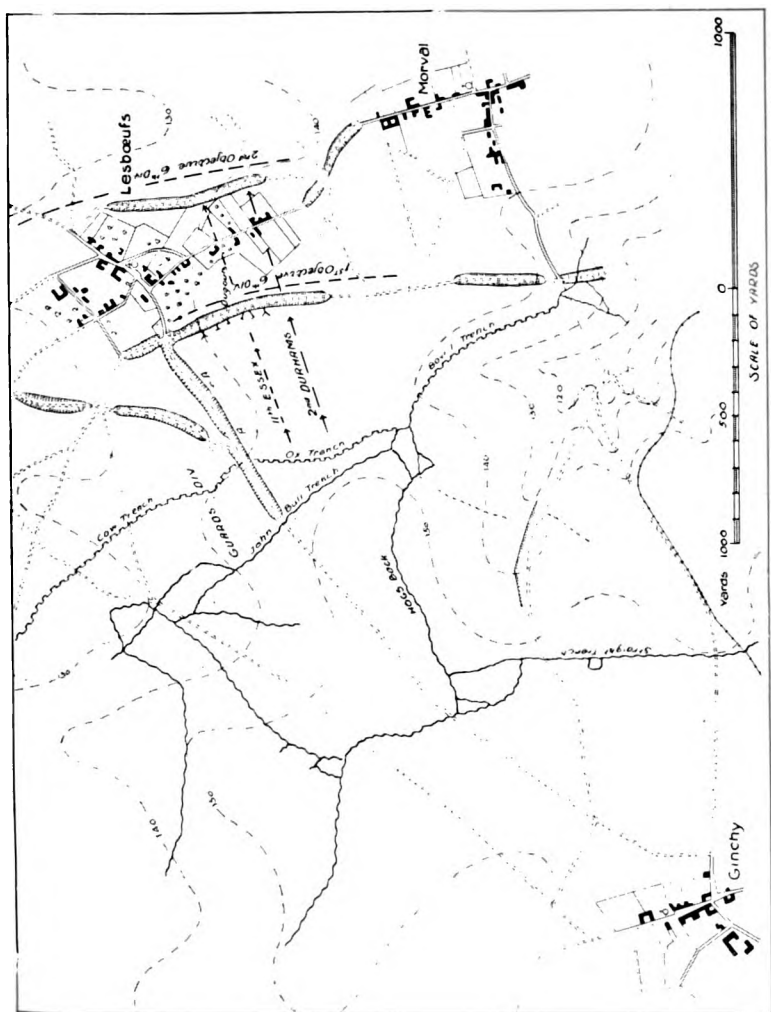
On September 17th the Battalion was sent to occupy the trench running from Guillemont to Wedge Wood, which position was improved upon next day, when "D" Company went into a forward trench and "A" and "B" Companies consolidated a position which ran from Guillemont Cemetery. "C" Company and headquarters remained in support in the Guillemont-Wedge Wood line. The Battalion moved again on September 28th to another position in conformity with the 20th Division, the 6th and 20th Divisions being connected by a trench dug by "B" and "D" Companies. "In the afternoon we were ordered off to the left," says Colonel Spring, "to fill the gap which existed between our Division and the 20th Division. We moved off in artillery formation in the afternoon over open country, and were spotted by German 'planes, which brought their artillery on to us; we got through, however, without any serious loss. My memory of this is standing out in the open somewhere and being badly strafed whilst watching Harris's Company coming along, but it was worth it when Harris told me afterwards that he and his company were far from happy till they saw the C.O. being put through it, and they then felt that whatever happened they must come along! Alexander's Company and another were detailed to fill the gap between the Divisions. I sent Alexander off down a communication trench in command of these two companies and kept the rest of the Battalion back in reserve. I went down after Alexander to get information as to where we were to go, and well remember the horrid experience it was. The communication trench was being shelled and, as it had originally belonged to the Germans, was being properly taped. On coming round a traverse I met a lance-corporal of a Lewis gun section coming back; he told me that all his section had been 'done in.' In the next bay I found what was left of his men; they had all been laid out and I well recollect one was a very young lad whom I had often noticed as a particularly good soldier, who always greeted me with a smile, however nasty things were."

That night the 11th Essex were ordered to return to reserve and on the 19th were in billets in Meaulte. Two days later they marched back again and after bivouacking south of Trones Wood, they relieved the Coldstream Guards in the front line, their left resting on the road running from Ginchy to Lesbœufs. The medical officer distinguished himself by falling in the dark into the Guards trenches and was nearly bayoneted by a Guardsman in consequence. "The Germans were in the continuation of our trench," recalled Colonel Spring, "and as the country sloped away, we had the unusual experience of overlooking them. We were getting ready for an attack on Lesbœufs and as the Germans were nervous of this, they continually shelled our area and we

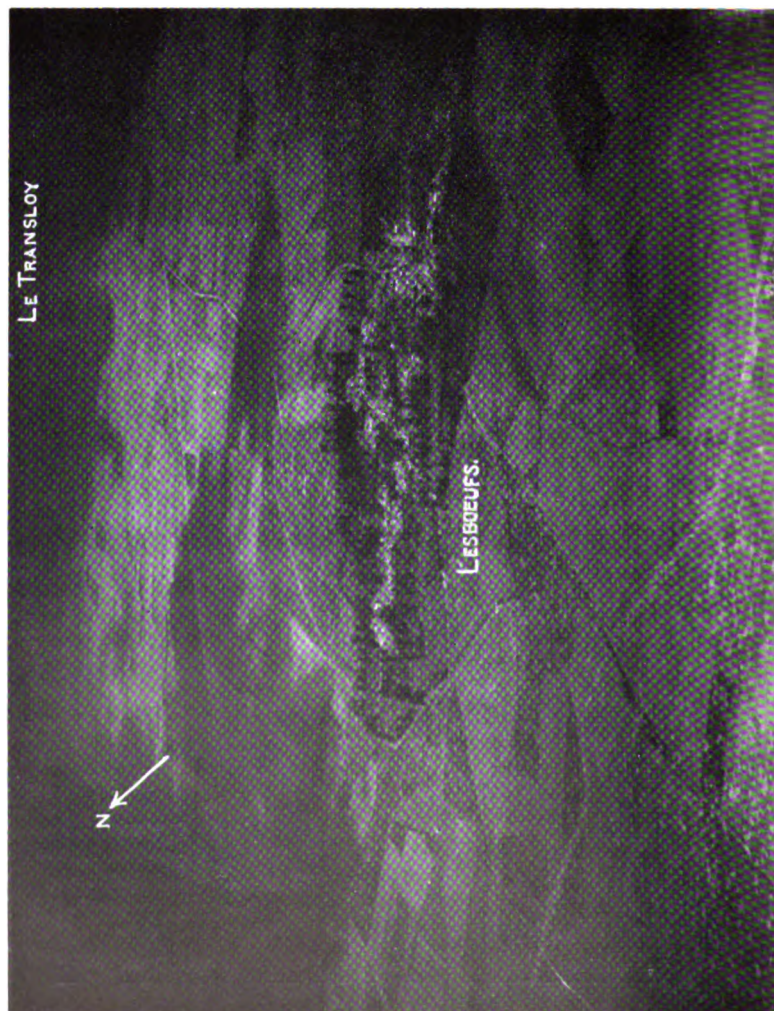
all had some narrow shaves. I remember being very impressed by my servant, Private Doy, one afternoon. Just as I was coming up to Battalion headquarters shelling commenced and I quickly hopped off; not so Doy, who was cleaning my boots, and when I came back was doing so quite unconcernedly as if nothing was happening. Doy was an old soldier of the Lincolnshires, who had done his 21 years with the colours and came back for the war. He was a splendid fellow. This was the spirit that ran through the 11th Essex. No wonder we won the war with such magnificent men."

IN FRONT OF LESBŒUFS.

Whilst in this sector the Battalion dug assembly trenches, from which it attacked on September 25th, when the 6th Division was put in to take the ground between the north end of Morval (attacked by the 5th Division) and the road which passed through the centre of Lesbœufs. The Essex had to take the second objective, a sunken road in front of Lesbœufs, and were completely successful. They had practically no casualties when going across the open, owing to the men keeping very close to their barrage. The artillery barrage was very good and the Germans surrendered at once, showing no fight at all. Twelve trench mortars (three of them of heavy calibre) and about 200 prisoners were taken. The 1st West Yorks then passed through the 11th Essex and cleared the village of Lesbœufs, establishing a line about 200 yards east of the village. "The 18th Brigade was on the left of the 6th Division," wrote Colonel Spring, "and attacked with the 2nd Durham Light Infantry on the right and the 11th Essex on the left. The Guards and 5th Division were given the first objective, which was to come up level with the 6th Division, and we all then went forward to the second objective, which was the west side of Lesbœufs. The other two battalions of the 18th Brigade were then to go through the Durham Light Infantry and Essex on to the third objective. All went splendidly and the Guards came up level with us, our fellows especially noticing one Guardsman who raced along ahead of his comrades. The Durham Light Infantry and Essex then went forward with the Guards and secured the sunken road west of Lesbœufs. There was very little resistance, but the Guards lost a good many at the start. We found a number of enemy Lewis guns in the road on our left, which we collected, and these came in most useful later on as spares for training Lewis gunners. I was with our leading companies about 8 p.m. on their objective at Lesbœufs, when I saw our transport officer, Featherstonhaugh, whom I imagined to be miles away in rear. He grinned and said, 'I've brought up the rations!' And there he was with his limbers. He had brought them straight up the road without a casualty, and, moreover, he got them back without one. Other Battalions brought theirs up just after dusk and lost badly through German shelling. It was a great piece of



THE ATTACK ON LESBŒUFS.
A.A - The Sinken Road which the Germans traversed who surrendered.



(Imperial War Museum, Crown Copyright).

Air photograph showing Lesbœufs, looking North-East.

initiative on the part of 'Feathers' to do this and to jump to it that the first few hours after a successful attack was the quietest time, as the German artillery did not then know the position of our front line and their own. On this day the Germans were in full retreat and it seemed a pity we could not go on. When they saw the advance had stopped they filtered back again."

"The men were in great spirits over the success of the Lesbœufs attack," wrote another officer. "It had all been well planned and our guns had given the enemy an overpowering bombardment. Overnight a white tape was laid from our front line back across country to within sight of Battalion headquarters for the guidance of messengers during the battle. The shelling was heavy on both sides, but we had easily the best of it. Nevertheless, it was far from pleasant going up the communication trench and then along through other Battalions in the front line. Peeping over the parapet the Germans could be seen crouching in shell holes in front of their trench. They evidently found these safer than the trench, which our guns were crumping very heavily. At first we thought it was a ruse on their part, but when our fellows got over the top the Germans did not wait to be attacked, but got up at once and, putting their hands up, ran through the Essex ranks. The men seemed mystified and hardly knew how to cope with it. Some started to fire back at the Germans. But as soon as it was found that the surrender was genuine, this was stopped, as there was danger of shooting our own troops. Most of this time I was standing up on top of our parapet, revolver in hand, in case of trouble. After a bit I got down into the sunken road on our left flank and went along it to the village. There was quite a stream of Germans coming down it, and some of our wounded lying at the sides of the road. These were the Guards, who were on our left. I remember one Guardsman, badly wounded, who was calling for a stretcher. There was no hope of that just then, so I took the cap off a passing German (who walked on quite unconcernedly, as if having his cap taken off his head was a usual occurrence) and threw it to the wounded man. He was quite bucked with the souvenir. I found our fellows busy digging themselves in in the bank of the road on our side of the village. All were pleased with the affair. Ferguson and Scott were together (as usual) and their only request was for cigarettes. The enemy had a real shaking up and retreated some miles, moving their guns back, which kept them out of action and gave us a respite for the consolidation of the position. We could walk freely about the country and were able to bring up rations over the top. During this show we had a real instance of the 'luck' of war. One of my signallers was an elderly man a bit past active work, so I detailed him to stay near Battalion headquarters in charge of the pigeons. The bombardment had scarcely commenced when a shell landed near and killed him outright, blowing his basket of pigeons to nothing."

During the next two days the line of the sunken road was converted into a defensible position, with a deep fire trench about forty yards in front, and four communication trenches running back to the road. This was accomplished under practically continuous and heavy shelling. On the night of September 28th the Battalion went back to bivouac at Meaulte, having suffered a loss of 21 killed and 118 wounded. On the 30th the Essex moved to Ville-sur-Ancre.

So much in short outline of a brilliantly successful operation. The details of those days are more fully given in the diary of Captain A. K. Fison :—

September 21st.—Company parade for moving up the line at a quarter to ten. We were to proceed first to bivouac in a trench near Trones Wood; the march was dreary to the last degree. We started along the road, but did not get very far that way owing to the tremendous block of transport on the roads. After that we proceeded in single file across country, for the most part through deep and sticky mud. Arrived at half-past three. The Company presently proceeded to get tools, bombs, etc., from the Brigade dump nearby. At seven moved on again to the fighting area beyond Ginchy. "D" Company took over a frontage in the front line opposite Lesbœufs, while "A" had to dig themselves in on a line some fifty yards behind them. "B" Company, under myself, were close to Battalion headquarters some half a mile back, while "C" took up a position right in rear between Guillemont and Ginchy. On reaching our position we found ourselves in a thoroughly bad trench, under water in many places and badly knocked in in others. It was a great deal too cold to sleep and we were short of rations owing to an accident, the ration cart the day before having stuck in the mud.

September 22nd.—At 3.30 a.m. Courtney turned up safely with a bag of provisions. The weather turned out lovely for a change, and the men worked during the morning improving the trench. About 2 p.m. a few crumps landed close by us, but luckily none actually in the trench. At 3 p.m. went up to the front line with Perkins and two platoon sergeants to make various arrangements with Alexander and reconnoitre the ground for our coming attack on Lesbœufs. At 8 p.m. took up the Company to dig an assembly trench. We had a quiet time after the first half-hour, did some good work and had no casualties.

September 23rd.—At 3 a.m. returned to our own line. Again found sleep impossible owing to the cold, and this time, in addition, we were pretty continuously shelled. The day was again fine and our own guns were very hard at work all day. From my own trench Lesbœufs was unfortunately not visible, but the neighbouring village of Morval was in full view and it was a thrilling sight to see our shells bursting in it with tremendous explosions and much smoke and dust. Fritz was also pretty busy, chiefly on the neighbourhood of Leuze Wood, but his efforts

were nothing to ours. Our own front line trench, however, was badly knocked about and Alexander's company had a lot of casualties, he, himself, being wounded. At night we were relieved. It was pitch dark, but we managed to find our way back successfully to the bivouac area by means of white tapes laid down for the purpose across country.

September 24th (Sunday).—Reached bivouac at half-past twelve, very tired, after a march of two hours, and had a canteen of tea and rum, very welcome. Slept till eight o'clock. On waking found a post had just arrived, also some food supplies from Harris, who was staying with the transport as company second-in-command. Spent a lazy day, only refitting and drawing a few more trench stores, etc. In the afternoon operation orders were issued for the attack next day. Moved off at 7.30 p.m. to go up to the assembly trenches. Fritz appeared to have got wind of the relief, for he started shelling heavily, making the last part of the march very uncomfortable. We had four casualties in my company on the way up and some of the others had a lot more. It was not too comfortable in the trenches when we finally reached them, as they were very narrow ; however, this was, perhaps, as well, as we were shelled more or less continuously all the time we were in them.

September 25th.—The morning was fairly quiet except for spasmodic enemy crumps dropping round us all the time. The attack was due to start at 12.35. At this hour duly our artillery barrage began on the right and left (our own attack was not to start till an hour later, as we occupied a rather pronounced salient and the line was to be straightened out first). On our left the Guards Division went over in our full view, and they made an unforgettable sight. The creeping barrage was perfect and the Guards moved behind it as though on parade. After some five minutes we had to keep our heads down instead of watching the show, as Fritz started crumping us heavily. No direct hit on my own trench, though he buried seven of Perkins' fellows in the trench immediately in front. At 1.35 a fresh barrage started all along the line and we went over. We had a creeping barrage two hundred yards in front of the first wave as well as a fixed barrage on the enemy's trench some six hundred yards away, along a sunken road in front of Lesbœufs. The show was a complete walk-over as far as we were concerned. Fritz came running out with his hands up at once and only one or two of their officers put up a bit of a fight in a dug-out on the road. In ten minutes we had got our objective and were digging ourselves in on the far side of the road. I lit several flares as signals to our aeroplanes. The men showed a considerable tendency at first to sit down and have drinks and collect trophies, but I managed to get them all digging before long. For the first two or three hours the enemy put very few shells over and we were able to get along very well. As soon as the trench was

finished the men started making holes for themselves as shelters just behind on the enemy's side of the sunken road. Company headquarters was at the bottom of the bank. Shelling at night was moderate and I managed to get an hour or two's sleep.

September 26th (anniversary of the 11th Essex's attack and my own wound at Loos last year).—Water and rations arrived in the early hours, the water being particularly welcome, as our supplies were exhausted. "D" Company were withdrawn during the night to our old front line trench. During the morning we continued consolidating the position. Moderate shelling. About one o'clock a great uproar arose; our own guns were putting up a barrage in front and the enemy replied with a heavy crumping of the village. Being at first in the dark as to the situation, we stood to for a while. I found out, however, from the officer commanding the Guards on my left that it was merely some of our own troops in the line in front taking up a more advanced position. During the bombardment an unlucky shell knocked out several of my fellows on the bank. There seemed to be fairly large operations going on on our left, where our cavalry were plainly visible a mile or so away, advancing, but we could not see how they got on. After four o'clock things were pretty quiet again. My company was placed, in the evening, under the command of the West Yorks in front of us (they had advanced through us during the attack yesterday to the front of the village), in case of being wanted for any purpose. At 6.30 a message came from them requiring me to move up and relieve their left company, which was to go forward and consolidate a new forward line in an hour's time. We did this with perfect success, but at ten o'clock the relieved company came back, it having apparently been decided not to try to hold the new forward line. We, therefore, returned again to our sunken road behind the village.

September 27th.—Very heavy enemy shelling all the morning. In the intervals the company was busy on various jobs, making latrines, clearing up salvage, etc. At 11.30 I was sent for by the O.C. 14th D.L.I. (Roshier) to arrange for the placing of my company under his orders, as he was about to relieve the West Yorks. While returning to my own headquarters across the open, found myself right in the middle of some shrapnel bursts and was interested to see what effect the shrapnel bullets might have on my tin hat and waistcoat (the latter a present from home); no hit was registered, however, though the earth round spouted like a pond in a shower. At a quarter past two some attacks took place on both sides of us, and a creeping barrage was put down on our own front, just to encourage Fritz, though no infantry advance was actually being made on our sector. About four the shelling died down again. During last night, by the way, "A" Company had gone back to the old line to join "D," leaving only myself and "C" on the sunken road, and after this the two remaining

companies moved their respective headquarters to a wonderfully "posh" dug-out which had been cleared up a bit the morning before by some sappers. About dusk we had a little rain for the first time since the advance, but not enough to matter. The Company worked till half-past one improving our trenches. I gave Perkins charge for the night and got some hours of good sleep, for the first time since we had been in the fighting.

September 28th.—The C.O. came round on a tour of inspection about 7 a.m. Lazy morning. At 11.30 received a visit from Duke, who came to arrange work for the following night. Shortly after I received a message from the 14th D.L.I., incidentally disclosing the fact that we were to be relieved at night by the 71st Brigade. Pretty heavy shelling all day by both sides. We were supposed to move up to work in the front line at half-past six in the evening, but the strafing was so bad I had to put it off till nearly eight, when the Company moved up, with the exception of the Lewis gunners. We had to dig a piece of trench which up to now had been merely sketched out. It was very bad luck having to do a job like this on the night of being relieved, but there was no help for it. We finished by 11.30. The line had been periodically shelled during this time and we had three casualties. The strength of the Company was now sadly reduced, having only about half the number of men we went in with.

September 29th.—At two in the morning our relief turned up at last in the shape of a company of the Sherwood Foresters. The relief was a good deal disturbed by shelling, but at three o'clock we got safely away. The ground having been rendered very sticky by rain, we took the risk of going by road through Ginchy and Guillemont, and reached our bivouac on a bare and desolate space of open ground between Carnoy and Montauban at six. Had a little early breakfast and went to sleep in a German waterproof sheet in a cold drizzle of rain which had just started. At a quarter to two the Battalion started on its march back to Meaulte, where we found poor billets for one night.

It was of this time that the following episode was long cherished in the 11th Essex. The Battalion was marching back, every man possessed of some German souvenir—a hat or a cape—and wearing it. A canter of hooves—an indignant voice—the Colonel's! "Is this a — Boche Battalion?" The offending articles quickly disappeared.

Another story, told by Corporal G. D. Chase: "You will go to Ginchy station and get a signal lamp from the 2nd D.L.I." It is dark, the way uncertain and Ginchy station was not a well-lighted busy series of platforms, throbbing with passengers, unless for other realms. A sudden shriek causes a dive into a trench. A form is seated on the firestep asleep in the half-light. His bayonet rests by his side. I shake his shoulder. "Which is the way to Ginchy station?" No reply. Again and yet again I ask the question. No reply. I look closely; he is, indeed,

'asleep.' I press on rather hurriedly. A length of track, about three yards long, supporting a truck. Nothing else around but desolation. The sound of voices, a slit of light. "Is this Ginchy station?" "Yes." "The 2nd D.L.I.'s?" "Yes." I have discovered Ginchy and gratefully slither down the steps as a 'train' arrives. The 5.9, I think."

SERVICE BEFORE GUEUDECOURT.

Whilst at Ville-sur-Ancre the Battalion received a draft of 50 other ranks, and six new officers arrived from the 8/5th Essex. On October 8th the Essex took over trenches at Gueudecourt, relieving the Somersets, of 61st Infantry Brigade, with the 2nd D.L.I. on their right and the 12th Division on the left. "The headquarters of 61st Brigade promised to provide guides at a certain place for us," recalled Colonel Spring. "We went back to find the Battalion, which eventually arrived, having had a poisonous march from Ville-sur-Ancre over crowded and muddy roads. We moved off at dusk and found no guides at the rendezvous, so I went to the Brigade Headquarters and, after getting them, sent each company off with two guides apiece. I went with Battalion headquarters' group and we were particularly unfortunate; at least, our guides were. As we were going along in the dark one of our guns suddenly blew off, wounding one of the guides. The poor fellow told me he was due for furlough the next day. These reliefs, when going over new country and worming our way through our own battery positions in the pitch dark, were nasty experiences. Later as we were reaching Gueudecourt we came into a bad strafe and our remaining guide disappeared; there were some trenches near and we got into them. When it was over and we were ready to start there was no sign of our guide and after much searching he was eventually found either shell-shocked or wounded, but, anyway, quite immovable. Here was a nice situation. We were absolutely in the 'blue,' knowing we could not be far from the line and the companies, who had the other guides, were dispersed. Luckily we heard movement and found one of the companies was passing quite close to us, so we tacked on. We landed up at the Somersets' headquarters and were cheered by the news that it was a poisonous spot, which the Germans shelled every half-hour. During this tour I got a 'phone message one evening from Ferguson, who was commanding a company in the front line, to say he could see considerable movement in the German line and suspected an attack. Duke and I at once mobilized Battalion headquarters, every man jack lining our trench—orderly room clerks, runners, cooks, servants; a motley array! The excitement was too much for one of the clerks, who at once let off his rifle at an enemy 'plane, nearly hitting my head, so he was sent off and told to continue the war with his pen! Shortly after Ferguson again rang me up to say the movement had died down and he thought it was only a German

relief coming in." When relieved on October 10th the Battalion went to Trones Wood, having suffered 47 casualties during its two and a half days' stay in the trenches.

"The whole area was subject to intermittent shelling," wrote an Essex officer, "and from our trenches we could look back right across the valley and see the shell bursts for miles. We could also see anyone coming up to the trenches from back areas and, as far as our own Battalion was concerned, they knew we were watching. As soon as we identified any of our own people coming we got a good deal of amusement out of their progress across the shell-holes, endeavouring to look unconcerned as they heard a shell, but ever ready to drop flat on the ground if they thought one was uncomfortably near—and, of course, they all seemed nearer than they were. Every foot of the ground had been churned up by shell-bursts and this in a way made it safer, for shells fell into old shell-holes and the effect of the explosion was minimized by the soft ground. There were times when a shell would burst so close to a man that his survival seemed impossible, yet when the smoke cleared away he would be seen crouching in the very earth which had been thrown up. The French were on our right flank and the blue-grey of their uniforms looked very pretty as we saw them a mile or so away. The M.O. was highly delighted when he discovered a ruined cottage, which he quickly appropriated as his aid post. Only the cellar remained and the building had been so knocked down that it formed a mound of bricks which made the cellar quite shell-proof. So far, so good—but if the cellar was safe the vicinity wasn't. It was soon discovered that the enemy used this building as a ranging mark and that while it was all right inside, it was sudden death very often either to approach or leave and so it was quite useless for anything except the headquarters of a suicide club. The poor Doctor got badly 'chipped' for many a long day over this unlucky choice. I shall never forget one nasty time in this same area. We wanted telephone communication with one of the companies, but it was reckoned to be only temporary, so to save wire we arranged to take our line over the top at night. Normally this would have been fairly easy, as I had men posted at the company headquarters to give us the direction when we got near. The enemy trenches were very close to ours and they must have heard our drum turning, because they gave us all they could of machine gun fire, so that we had to finish the journey for some distance along the back of our trench, on our 'tummies,' which was very unpleasant. Whether we had stirred them up or not, I don't know—I hardly think so—but, anyway, on our way back to Battalion headquarters we ran into a full-dress bombardment, which, catching us out in the open, gave us a thorough fright. Some of our men nearby had a really bad time and there were a number of casualties. On another occasion I was away from Battalion headquarters on a job of work which

made it impossible for me to get back for lunch. I was sorry, as I knew that a feed of hot Maconachie ration was in preparation. When I returned I found that they had saved my share and I soon got busy with it. Then the story came out. They had all—the headquarters officers—received their tins of hot rations and were preparing to get on with it—somebody had covered mine with a lid—when over came a shell. It burst a few yards away and sent a shower of mud all over the party, quite spoiling their food. I thought it very sporting of them to leave mine for me.”

LE TRANSLOY TRENCH SYSTEM.

The Battalion was back again on October 13th, ready for the attack upon the Le Transloy trench system. 2nd D.L.I. were on the right and Essex on the left. “A” and “B” Companies were in the van, whilst “C” Company were to guard the left flank of the attack. “D” Company were in reserve. The first objective was Mild Trench, running out of Cloudy Trench, and the next was Cloudy Trench, the left to rest on Milky Way. The line beat back to Gueudecourt, which was not occupied, and there was considerable anxiety as to the safety of this flank.

“My plan, as far as I can remember,” wrote Colonel Spring, “was for two companies each on a front of 100 yards to carry through to the final objective with a third company (I think commanded by Hunt) to follow the left company, and to place posts to guard the left as the advance continued. Our reserve company was already in position to guard the left of our original sector. On attaining our final objective my plan was to thin out the two leading companies and Hunt’s company and to bring back one company into our original front line trench as a reserve. I saw the companies assembling and ready to push off, leaving them just before the zero hour, 5.35 a.m., to return to Battalion headquarters. The Brigadier had given both Colonel Irvine and myself strict orders on no account to leave our headquarters and to personally keep in touch with him by ‘phone; thus I knew very little of what was happening, as the jumping-off line could not be seen from our headquarters. I soon gathered, however, from reports that came and from the walking wounded, that things were far from well, so Colonel Irvine and I rang up Brigade headquarters and said we must go forward and off we went. On getting down to the jumping-off line, our original front line trench, we found that the D.L.I. had not been able to get into Mild Trench, the first objective, and were back in their original line; the Essex were, however, in Mild Trench on the left and were holding it. I went down what had been a communication trench, which, from the shelling, was now only knee-deep and found that we were in Mild Trench for about 50 yards each side of the communication trench. The trench was very congested with men and numbers of wounded were lying in it. On the eastern, or right, side our fellows and the Germans were in adjacent bays bombing one

another. I was told that the D.L.I. on the right had failed to get into Mild Trench owing to German machine guns which had enfiladed them from the right; also that our men had gone on towards the next objective, but had come under heavy fire from Cloudy Trench, and the attack had failed. After trying to get the defence organized I ordered the senior officer there to strengthen his blocks on each flank and to thin out his line, sending men back to our original front line and I went back there myself. I remember on the way back meeting, I think, C.S.M. Boast carrying up bombs. It was an extraordinary experience wandering about between Mild Trench and our old front line. The communication trench was only knee-deep, the ground a round was amass of shell-holes, with Germans and our men bombing one another in Mild Trench; rifle fire was also going on between the D.L.I. in our old front line and the Germans. It was not until later in the day that I realized that I had been going about in a Sam Browne belt with a map case slung over my shoulder, followed by my runner. How we were not picked off is a wonder, but one does not think of such things at these times. On reaching our old front line I found Colonel Irvine, who suggested that his battalion should make another attack to gain Mild Trench on our right. I advised him not to do so, as in full light without a heavy artillery barrage his men would have little chance of getting over the open ground and he decided not to attempt it. I then met, I think, Fison, who was in command of our reserve company, and told him to take command of our old front line until I could get Battalion headquarters up. Just at this time I could see our Battalion headquarters area was getting a bad shelling and on reaching I heard that Duke and the officer who had taken over adjutant of the D.L.I., vice their Adjutant, killed on the previous evening, had been buried. Luckily, Duke was dug out in time, but the other boy was dead. Our Battalion headquarters and those of 2nd D.L.I. were in adjacent bays of an old German trench. After reporting the situation to Brigade headquarters, I started off with Battalion headquarters personnel for our old front line, but just as we were starting a message came in to say that the Germans had delivered a strong bombing attack along Mild Trench and our men had fallen back to our original front line. On arrival there we found this to be true, so I organized the survivors of the three forward companies of the attack, with the reserve company to hold it and the trench on our left, keeping Battalion headquarters in the front line. Late at night we were relieved and went back to Trones Wood. I remember how very quiet the Germans were; we could see them hopping about from shell-hole to shell-hole and our men kept sniping at them. Some artillery officers also came up and we got the guns on. After dark we had parties out scouring the ground for our wounded and I remember being very struck with a corporal (I think of

"B" Company), who wandered about with his party as if no Germans were near. This corporal was eventually killed in front of Loos in March, 1917; he had been the M.O.'s lance-corporal and had gone back to duty on promotion. I cannot recall his name, but someone else may. This period was about the most trying I went through during the war. The Somme fighting was done under great physical and mental strain. The ground was so heavy and muddy, cut up by shell-holes, that to walk any distance over it was fatiguing; in addition, we were continuously under shell-fire day and night, as we were living in old German trenches and so were properly taped. On our way back to Trones Wood I went with a small party of Battalion headquarters. I remember it was a bright moonlight night and at one of the halts we all fell asleep. For how long we slept I do not know, but I woke up first and had great difficulty in rousing the others; it shows how absolutely done up we were. There is little doubt that the German artillery opened up on our men before zero, when they were assembling, as Hunt was blown up before they moved off (I saw his runner in hospital and got the story from him). The confusion probably caused our attack to move off late and lose the barrage on the right."

A moving story of what occurred in the first waves was written by Lieut. J. A. S. Ackman, of "A" Company: "When we 'kicked off' from the assembly trenches we were a good way behind the barrage. I had orders to make a right incline so as to join up with the 2nd D.L.I. on our right. This we did, but for some reason or other we could not get in touch; I could scarcely see them owing to mist and also the battle smoke. The first wave had had very few casualties, but whilst we were hurrying on we ran into a barrage. I was hit in the face with a clod of earth and fell down, but, finding I was only stunned, I caught up with the waves. Things seemed a bit hazy for a time until I found myself near a road lying with a few men around me and a Lewis gun. Kinnersley was just behind; he had very few men, indeed. I could not understand where our men had gone, for there were not more than a dozen altogether. Kinnersley sent back two messengers, but they were both hit whilst running. He then crawled up to me. A machine gun was firing close to us and we turned the Lewis on to it. This was no good and our gun stopped. Then someone shouted (Kinnersley, I think), "Come on," and we all rose up and started towards the gun. Kinnersley went down and I got a terrific hit in the mouth and at the same time my left leg collapsed under me and I fell into a shell-hole. All who were with me also dropped down. How long we stayed there I cannot say, but I remember sniping at Germans running about in front of us. Then things quietened a bit and I thought best to get back to the trench we had captured—not far away—and hold that. It seemed futile to be there in the open—most of us wounded—while there was a chance of



H.Q. OFFICERS, MARLES-LES-MINES, 1916.

Back Row (left to right): R.S.M. —, Or-Master, Lieut. E. F. Jarvis; Transport Officer, Lieut. C. Featherstonhaugh; Signal Officer, Lieut. T. G. Murray; R.Q.M.S. —, Chaplain, Rev. Barlow Poole; Second in Command, Major J. D. Read; Col. F. G. Spring; Adj't., Capt. J. Duke; M.O., Capt. Ronaldson.

reinforcing those in the trench. We soon learned that we did not hold many yards of the German trench, for we caught glimpses of Germans immediately behind us, but to our left rear we saw some of our men and made for them. Two of them helped Kinnersley into this trench, wherein were several men with bombs and Lewis guns. British and German were lying dead there. A message came from Battalion headquarters to hold on at all costs and I asked in return for more men and bombs. My intention was to bomb left and right and clear out 200 or 300 yards of trench. The Germans were very quiet then and, I think, had the wind up. Then I remember losing consciousness and when I came to another officer was coming up to take charge. I was helped back by several wounded men and then heard from Colonel Spring that the trench had been lost."

The casualties were severe. Nine officers were killed, missing or wounded, with 164 of other ranks. The officers who fell included Lieut. James Duncan Ferguson, 2nd Lieutenants Ralph Leslie Hunt and Lawrence Nullars Kinnersley. The first-named had been badly shaken by a shell explosion just previously, but as he had just got command of a company he entreated that he should not be sent down and leave his men on the eve of an engagement. He went back to his company and was mortally wounded in the attack. He was one of the original 11th Essex and he was such "a lovable, keen, straight lad," wrote Colonel Spring, "that his death, even in a time like this, when so many fell out, left a big blank in the Battalion. This was one of the worst days the Battalion had."

The survivors of the Battalion went into brigade reserve in Trones Wood during the night 15th-16th October and then on October 22nd proceeded by rail from Mericourt to Wiry-au-Mont, 24 miles south-east of Abbeville. "C" Coy. and headquarters were billeted in that town and three companies in Dreuil. At the end of the month the Battalion was at Marles-les-Mines, having been successively at Pont Remy and Chocques. The Division had left the Somme and was back again in familiar areas of the North. "As usual," wrote Lieut. T. G. Murray, "I was in charge of the Battalion advance party and we travelled by train to Bethune with the Brigade party under Major Boyall, of the West Yorkshire Regiment. We had to wait the whole of a very cold night on Abbeville station. I saw the lights of the Railway Transport Officer's hut at the end of the platform. One junior officer and a few clerks were on duty. Peeping through the door, I saw a stove and an empty bench. It looked very comfortable, so, venturing in, I put on my best smile and asked if I might have a short warm. The R.T.O. was a young man who evidently hadn't sufficiently realized that he had a 'cushy' job and should be grateful. He brusquely replied that I could warm myself, but, 'Don't be long about it.' In face of such 'cordiality,' my stay was very brief, and I then went out into the chilly

dawn. I had my revenge a few hours later, when this same youth came rushing up to Major Boyall. "I think this is your train, sir. Will you please get your party formed up?" The reply was balm to my wounded spirit (!). "You say you *think*. I don't act on suppositions. Go and find out." And off went that R.T.O. with his tail between his legs!"

IN THE LOOS SALIENT.

The Division spent the next twelve months in the Loos Salient, until, in fact, it was sent to form part of the army employed in the Cambrai enterprise, and it is well to give an outline of the divisional operations during this period before following the fortunes of the 11th Essex in detail. It was on November 25th that the Division became responsible for the La Bassee sector, which included Givenchy Ridge and Cuinchy Brickstacks, two names now an imperishable part of our military history. In the December following it went to the Cambrin-Hohenzollern Quarries (5,500 yards) front and stayed until the end of February, 1917. This line had been the scene of much fighting, but the time the Division spent there proved "the quietest ever experienced except before the storm of March, 1918, and the casualties would have been far fewer had it not been for several raids carried out by us." On March 1st the Division was responsible for a 11,000 yards front extending north from the Double Crassier at Loos, with sector Loos—14 Bis in Hulluch—Hohenzollern. The wide frontage made it imperative to put the three brigades in line, the Division having also attached to it a brigade of the 21st Division. In this quarter the Division had a much more active time, occupied with raid and counter raid. Then towards the middle of April the taking of Vimy caused the enemy to withdraw on the right, and upon which there was continuous fighting. Warning of the enemy's intention was received on April 13th and that day the York and Lancasters followed them up so closely that the enemy's dug-outs were seized before the candles had burnt out. "The policy laid down for the Division was that the enemy was to be closely followed up wherever he fell back, but that our troops were not to be committed to a serious engagement. In accordance with these instructions, the enemy's trenches were subjected to heavy bombardment, with pauses during which patrols were sent forward and occupied as much ground as they could. This policy was maintained for four days, during which the 16th Brigade pressed the enemy with such vigour, within the limits allowed to it, that he was evidently rushed farther back than had been his intention and began to be apprehensive as to his hold on Hill 70." The opposition gradually stiffened. By the end of April the line had become stabilized after severe fighting about Nash Alley, in which 11th Essex, in company with the 14th D.L.I., bore a part. The 14th D.L.I. captured their objective, also the right company of

11th Essex. Both these battalions were subjected to an intense artillery bombardment in the afternoon, followed by an infantry attack, and were forced back to their original line in Novel Alley. The advance had been undertaken by the 16th Brigade, with battalions from other Brigades attached (e.g., 11th Essex and 14th D.L.I.). The line was also held along the other two brigade fronts, a difficult and trying task. The historian of the 6th Division relates two incidents as showing how far spread was the Division during this period. "On one occasion an enemy raid penetrated both our front and support lines without being detected or meeting anyone, and came upon our reserve line by chance at the only place on the front of the brigade concerned where there was one company in the line. At another part of the front it was found, when normal conditions were restored, that in an abandoned part of our line between two posts the enemy had actually made himself so much at home that he had established a small dump of rations and bombs." The Division received the thanks from the Commander-in-Chief for its enterprise. At the end of June the 2nd Sherwood Foresters were attached to the 46th Division for the operations on the outskirts at Lens. On July 25th the Division was relieved after a prolonged watch and ward of the Loos sector for five months, in which trench warfare had been waged in accentuated form. No fewer than 30 raids were undertaken, of which 13 were entirely successful. The enemy raided 21 times, of which only four attained any substantial result. Among the raids particularly mentioned in the Divisional History was that of the 11th Essex on the 24th March, 1917, and also the combined effort of the 2nd D.L.I. and 11th Essex on June 28th, "a particularly fine performance," in which the company of each battalion engaged occupied the enemy's line for one hour and beat off several counter-attacks. For his gallantry upon this occasion, 2nd Lieut. F. B. Wearne, of the Essex, was awarded the V.C. posthumously. During the month's rest in August Major-General Ross was succeeded by Major-General T. O. Marden, C.M.G., who commanded for the rest of the war. From July 31st to August 5th the 1st Leicesters and the 9th Norfolks were assisting the 57th Division at the time Armentieres was gas shelled. At the end of August the Canadians were relieved at Lens and then towards the end of September the Division went into the Cité St. Emilie sector to prepare for an attack in company with the Canadians upon Sallaumines Hill. This conception never matured and the Division went for a rest in the St. Hilaire area west of Lillers. At the close of the month the Division turned its face south to take part with the Third Army in the Battle of Cambrai.

Many stories have survived of the stay of the 11th Essex on the Loos Salient. One of the best concerns the fate of the Battalion Lewis gun carts, told by Lieut. T. G. Murray: "It wasn't often that we found ourselves falling foul of higher

authority (although we delighted in a C.O. who could think for himself and wasn't a slave to red tape), but the matter of the Lewis gun carts was really very funny. Our fellows had dragged these barrows through the mud of the Somme until everyone was heartily sick of the sight of them. At last the C.O. said the Lewis gunners could leave them at a depot; in other words, 'dump' them. It was not until we had moved north to Loos that the staff discovered what had happened. My word, what a rumpus! The idea of scrapping equipment in this lighthearted fashion! The upshot was that an officer (R. C. Cross) and a party of men were sent back by rail to retrieve the wretched carts. Off they went, but before they got back and while the episode was providing material for a daily 'grouse' at headquarters, there came a circular from General Headquarters to be passed to all battalions. This stated in official language that the Lewis gun carts having proved to be useless for this purpose, they would be withdrawn and battalion commanders were requested to make suggestions as to what use could be made of them. I don't know what our C.O. replied, but the last of these barrows that I saw was being used for the collection of roadsweepings."

The same officer had also a trenchant word or two to say concerning communications: "The addition of trench wireless (temporarily) to our means of communication makes me wonder where it will stop. We have already, of course, the field telephone. This is the usual method, particularly for routine trench work. The practice is for Brigade headquarters to have a line to Battalion headquarters, which has lines to all four companies. Battalion has often a line to the artillery and to the two flank battalions. Then there may also be telephone lines to observation posts and the machine gunners. The laying and maintenance of these telephone wires night and day, mending as soon as possible breaks caused by shell fire or traffic (men moving up and down the trenches), is the signallers' chief duty. Buried cables are sometimes provided in places, but these are a luxury and unusual. We generally try to have two routes of wire, so that a break in one place does not cause a complete stoppage in communications. For special operations or in special places, we have used what is known as a 'ladder line,' which, as its name implies, is a ladder of wire, say, five hundred yards long and fifty yards wide, with cross wires every fifty yards. I have known, as at Posen Crater and Gueudecourt, such a system to be broken by shellfire in as many as twenty places and signals still be possible. With regard to our other methods, flags have seldom been possible. Lamps we used sometimes, as, for instance, at Mill Post, near Hamel. Helio—never; the light was not good enough or else conditions did not suit. Pigeons we often carried, but did not use much, and though we sometimes had messenger dogs, these were not of great service. With regard to pigeons, the males were marked with a blue spot and the females with a

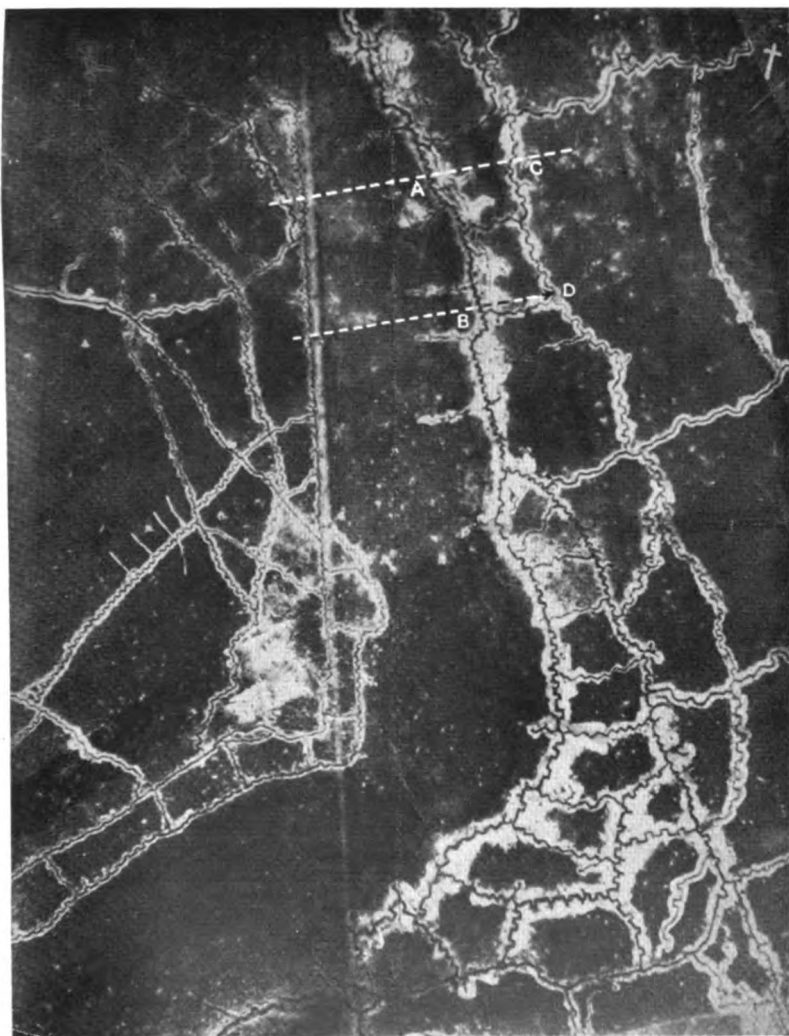
red. It was one of the first principles in pigeon work that blue and red should not be sent out together, lest they should tarry romantically by the way. Flappers (of the Venetian blind type) were sometimes useful, between ourselves—or the large ones on the ground for signalling to aircraft. We occasionally used 'power-buzzers'—by means of which signals were forced into the earth by high power batteries and these signals were collected elsewhere by receiving sets. But this was only good for Morse. Senior officers preferred speaking, having a curious contempt for our 'old dots and dashes.' On the other hand, we sometimes used the Fullerphone, specially constructed so that messages could not be picked up except at the other end of the wire."

Having given on the preceding pages a general outline of the divisional operations, we must now turn to the 11th Essex and see how the Battalion fared. Lieut.-Colonel Spring left the Battalion temporarily on November 3rd to command the 6th Divisional Schools, and was succeeded by Major E. V. Manger, 2nd D.L.I. The Battalion moved to the forward area in the Loos sector to take over reserve trenches from the 71st Brigade, on November 14th, being reorganized into three companies for the purpose. Two companies were billeted in Philosophie and one in dug-outs one hundred yards east of Annequin, the headquarters being in Nœux-les-Mines. The men were employed upon the construction of tunnel dug-outs. The four company system was re-established on November 24th, in preparation for a spell of front line work in the Cambrin sector, with transport and stores at Beuvry. The Battalion had one company in line, relieved every twenty-four hours, from December 1st to 10th, when billets were taken over in Annequin and Colonel Spring resumed command. When the time came to go up to the line again (December 15th) three companies only relieved a similar number of the 1st West Yorks, and "C" Company remained at Annequin to practise a contemplated raid on the German trenches. Lieut. Leonard St. Clair Read went on patrol on December 17th, but failed to return. Several search parties were sent out until daybreak, but they could not find any trace of him. The search was resumed the next night, but again without result. It subsequently transpired that he had been mortally wounded and he died three days later as a prisoner of war. When the Battalion was relieved on the 19th, "A" and "B" Companies went to Annequin and "B" and "D" Companies to the Village Line. For the rest of the month the Essex were in and out of the trenches. They spent Christmas Day in front of the enemy and celebrated the festival later—"B" and "D" Companies on the 29th and "A" and "C" on the 31st. The months had been very trying for all ranks. The rain was incessant and in many places men were up to their knees in mud and water. They were continually employed upon repair work.

When the Battalion went into the Cambrin left sector again on New Year Day, with two companies in front and two in

support, the trenches were very muddy. A party of sappers was organized, of 20 other ranks, under Lieut. Williams, to deal with the situation. On January 5th there was a return to familiar billets, where a Territorial draft of 212 other ranks was received and sent to the Divisional Training School at Chocques. There a 5th Training Company was formed, under Major A. A. Crocker, with staff from 11th Essex, and the men were returned to the Battalion as required. Major Roberts joined as Quartermaster on January 8th and thenceforth gave splendid service to the Battalion. Nothing was too much trouble for him and whatever the unit required was always forthcoming. "The only fear I had," wrote his commanding officer, "was that he would get hit, for nothing stopped him coming up daily with the rations. He used to roll up in the most unhealthy spots and always with a smile which did us good. He was a rock of strength to us all. There was no need to worry as to whether we should get clothing, equipment or rum; Roberts had a reserve supply of everything buried away in the subterranean depths of his billets." At the end of the month, when the Battalion was in and out with the 2nd D.L.I., the trenches were frozen hard and the ground was passable everywhere. When in Brigade reserve, on February 7th, orders were received to reorganize companies upon the following basis: Company headquarters, two officers and 19 other ranks; two fighting platoons, each of one officer and 46 other ranks; a third platoon of trained men to fill vacancies in the fighting platoons, and the fourth platoon to consist of men at the training school at Chocques. Battalion headquarters was to consist of five officers and 106 other ranks. When relieved on February 18th, the Battalion was sent to Sailly Labourse, where details rejoined. Thence on February 14th the Battalion marched to Busnes and there trained in the new company formation. It was on this march to Busnes that the drummers first played. Major H. S. Roberts, M.C. (Quartermaster), had managed to secure the transfer from the Base of eleven drummers of the Essex Regiment. There was much debate as to which tune should be chosen for a march past, and finally that of the 1st Battalion (44th) was adopted. The Drums were kept in being until March, 1918, when they were sent into the line at Gouzeaucourt and did splendid service. R.S.M. Larkham joined the Battalion about this time and was particularly efficient in carrying out the duties of his office.

The Battalion performed an excellent march to Montmorency Barracks, Bethune, on March 2nd, not a man falling out; thence they went next day into divisional reserve at Southern Huts, Mazingarbe, on March 4th into Brigade reserve, and on 8th March relieved 14th D.L.I. in the line. When at Busnes the Battalion had been warned to carry out a raid in the sector they would next occupy, and, in view of the fact that many small raids had recently failed, the C.O. made a proposal to employ four



The raid on "The Lozenge," 24th March, 1917. Key to operations on back of this plate.



0 100 200 300 400 500 YARDS.

D.H. BURLES

A-B. 1ST OBJECTIVE

C-D. 2ND OBJECTIVE

11th Essex Raid of 24th March, 1917.

companies and carry out a raid on a large scale. This was agreed to by the divisional commander. At Mazingarbe, on March 15th, the corps commander, Lieut.-General A. E. A. Holland, watched the Battalion practise over a course laid out to represent the existing trenches, and the Germans, to make the rehearsal more realistic, started to drop shells a short distance away. On March 23rd two companies of the 14th D.L.I. were attached and placed in support and reserve lines and the German trenches opposite the 71st and 16th Infantry Brigades were fired on by our artillery as a preliminary to the raid, which took place the next day. At this time the Battalion's trench strength was 27 officers and 700 other ranks.

RAID ON "THE LOZENGE."

Four companies, each of two officers and 80 other ranks, a total of eight officers and 320 other ranks, were detailed. The raided area was called "The Lozenge," lying in the sector north-north-east of Loos and immediately north of Puits 14 bis and the Chalk Pit. The first objective was the section of the front line lying immediately to the front, with the left of the Battalion attack on what was known as Posen Crater; the second, the new support trench later called Hobart. By the morning of the day appointed all the arrangements were complete. Short bridges had been placed in position by the R.E. for the second wave to cross the British front trenches, whilst a supply of mobile charges was in readiness for blowing up German dug-outs. Two waves of two companies each were formed, the first wave being assembled in the front line and the second in the support line. It was a fine clear day and in the afternoon the assaulting columns started trickling into their forming-up trenches. Just after they had got into position some German aeroplanes came over. Everyone stood stock still, for if they had been detected the results would have been serious with the men thickly lining the trenches. Two Lewis guns were to go with the first wave to guard the flanks in No Man's Land and three with the second wave to perform a similar mission on the flanks and also in the centre. Advanced battalion headquarters were established in the British front line and from there Colonel Spring was in touch with the permanent company headquarters in the line and also with the Brigade commander in the rear, who occupied battalion headquarters. The details of the attack were very carefully worked out. There was first a heavy bombardment of the enemy front and back areas, and then six minutes before zero an 18-pounder barrage on the first and second lines. At zero (7 p.m.) the infantry were to move forward, the first wave being timed to enter the German front line six minutes later. A ten minutes' bombardment of the second and third lines was to ensue and then at 7.16 p.m. it was hoped that the second wave would be in the second

German line. The British artillery fire had been so effective that the wire offered no obstacle to the assault. The 18-pounder barrage was also excellent, enduing all ranks with the utmost confidence in our artillery. Forty minutes before the infantry were due to jump the parapet and whilst they were standing packed in the trenches, the German heavy artillery opened and this, with several "shorts" from our heavy artillery, caused much damage to the trenches and to Posen Alley, causing 35 to 40 casualties. Of these ten were killed, including C.S.M. Brown. Among the other victims was Pte. Cole, who had been orderly to Colonel Spring since the day the latter took over command of the Battalion. Cole was beside the Colonel in the front line when a shell-burst killed him and half buried the commanding officer. They were both leaning against a traverse by advance battalion headquarters. A certain amount of disorganization inevitably followed, but the officers and N.C.O.'s admirably responded to the emergency and were well backed up by the men. It was probably the most critical moment of the whole operation, as not only were there casualties, but many men were actually half buried. A minute before zero the German bombardment came down again, but it did not stop the first wave, who went forward promptly at 7 p.m., protected by trench mortar fire on the right flank. The second wave went through ten minutes later and was also exactly up to time. The spirit of all ranks was excellent, the whole of them moving off, as the official report states, "like a pack of hounds." Very little resistance was encountered in the first line trench, which was wide and deep and well revetted. The few Germans there ran into dug-outs and were either bombed out by Mills grenades or blown up by mobile charges. The support line had been knocked in by the British heavy artillery and there was no sign of life. The German infantry retaliation was weak, being confined to rifle grenades fired from the left into the front line. A machine gun had been in action up to zero, but was knocked out when the 18-pounder barrage came down. The raid resulted in one officer and eight prisoners of the 72nd Regiment being taken, two Germans killed, five dug-outs blown in with their occupants, two machine gun emplacements destroyed, one machine gun captured, also a telescopic sight and three sandbags of documents. In addition, numerous casualties must have been inflicted by our artillery fire. Between the two lines triangular plates were observed with a hole in the centre, used for sniping, but they were too heavy to remove. The Essex casualties were four officers wounded and 62 other ranks killed and wounded, the greater number having become casualties before the Battalion left the trenches. Signal communication was maintained across No Man's Land by a ladder line, which had been previously prepared. It was reeled out by signallers following the first wave and dragged back on retirement. The system worked

excellently, for very shortly after the first wave were in the first objective the Signals Officer was speaking with his N.C.O., Corporal Chase. He was also in free communication throughout the subsequent phases of the operation, receiving intimation as to the exact time when the withdrawal was taking place. Communication with Brigade headquarters was not so easy, as the wire was broken by the preliminary gunfire.

Colonel Spring, recalling the incidents of that day, remembered saying to a man near him, "Come on, you must be my orderly now they have knocked Cole out," and being so impressed by his reply, which shows the mettle of those Essex men. "Oh, sir," he said, "I can't, as my officer expects me to carry over a telephone wire to the German line and I cannot fail him." The Colonel then got hold of a Battalion runner called Partridge, who remained with him until he left the Battalion. He was later given a commission. The Colonel added, "We found the German trenches all knocked about by the bombardment and the only existing dug-outs were blown in by mobile charges, which our men threw down. A German officer was brought to me in No Man's Land, who took something from his pocket and asked if he might keep it; it was his wife's or girl's photograph. I've often wished I could meet the young lady to tell her about it. When the time came to withdraw to our line the Germans must have picked up our signal, for Very lights went up on our flank and just as we were getting to our front line they opened on us with their guns. Luckily, they were not as accurate as our own guns had been before the raid, but we had a nasty few minutes expecting a counter-attack. I can see now Lance-Corporal Martin, of, I think, 'C' Company, looking over our parapet with a Lewis gun ready to stop them as if nothing would make him budge and taking no notice of the shelling. Incidents like these remain firm in one's memory even after eleven years and recall to one the splendid spirit of the men one served with."

The Battalion was relieved early on the morning of 25th March by 14th D.L.I., and proceeded to Mazingarbe. Two days later the Battalion was addressed by the Corps Commander (Lieut.-General A. E. A. Holland).¹ On the 29th it was in Brigade reserve, but next day relieved the 14th D.L.I. in the front line, when the chief incident was a raid by the 1st Buffs on the right.

The Battalion strength on April 1st was 25 officers and 669 other ranks. When on April 3rd a burst of Lewis and machine

1. The following is the text of the Corps Commander's speech: "I came the other day and I talked to you for a few minutes before you made this raid, and I told you that I looked upon these raids as a valuable means of holding our line and not in any way as minor enterprises. I come now, men, to thank you for the way in which you carried out this raid. I told you then, and I told you with confidence, that the success of these raids depends on the spirit and the courage of the individual men in the ranks. This is the final stay upon which we can rest any hopes of success—the man in the ranks. Men, you had that spirit.

(Continued on Next Page).

gun fire was directed upon the enemy lines, they put up a S.O.S. signal rocket (golden rain) and retaliated with a stiff barrage on the front and support lines. A sentry rang an alarm bell in mistake and the Divisional S.O.S. signal was given, which started the British barrage. The disturbance soon died down, because no attack was intended on either side. The incident disclosed, however, that the S.O.S. arrangements were faulty. Telephonic communication was capable of improvement, but a good light signal had not been evolved. The rockets at present in use were not sufficiently distinctive and liable to be affected by bad weather. On April 4th Lieut. J. P. Chambers died of wounds.

The Battalion exchanged duty in and out of the line with the 14th D.L.I., during which Captain D. C. Hasler became second-in-command, vice Major A. A. Crocker. The success at Vimy and the capture of Bois en Hache and the Pimple caused the enemy to prepare to withdraw west of Lens through Lievin, though on April 13th he was still occupying trenches in the neighbourhood of the Double Crassier. Fires were seen in Lens, Lievin and Cité St. Auguste. The 16th Brigade was ordered to act as advanced guard. Active patrolling was instituted and preparations made for a move forward, Bois Hugo and Hill 70, commanding points, being kept under constant observation.

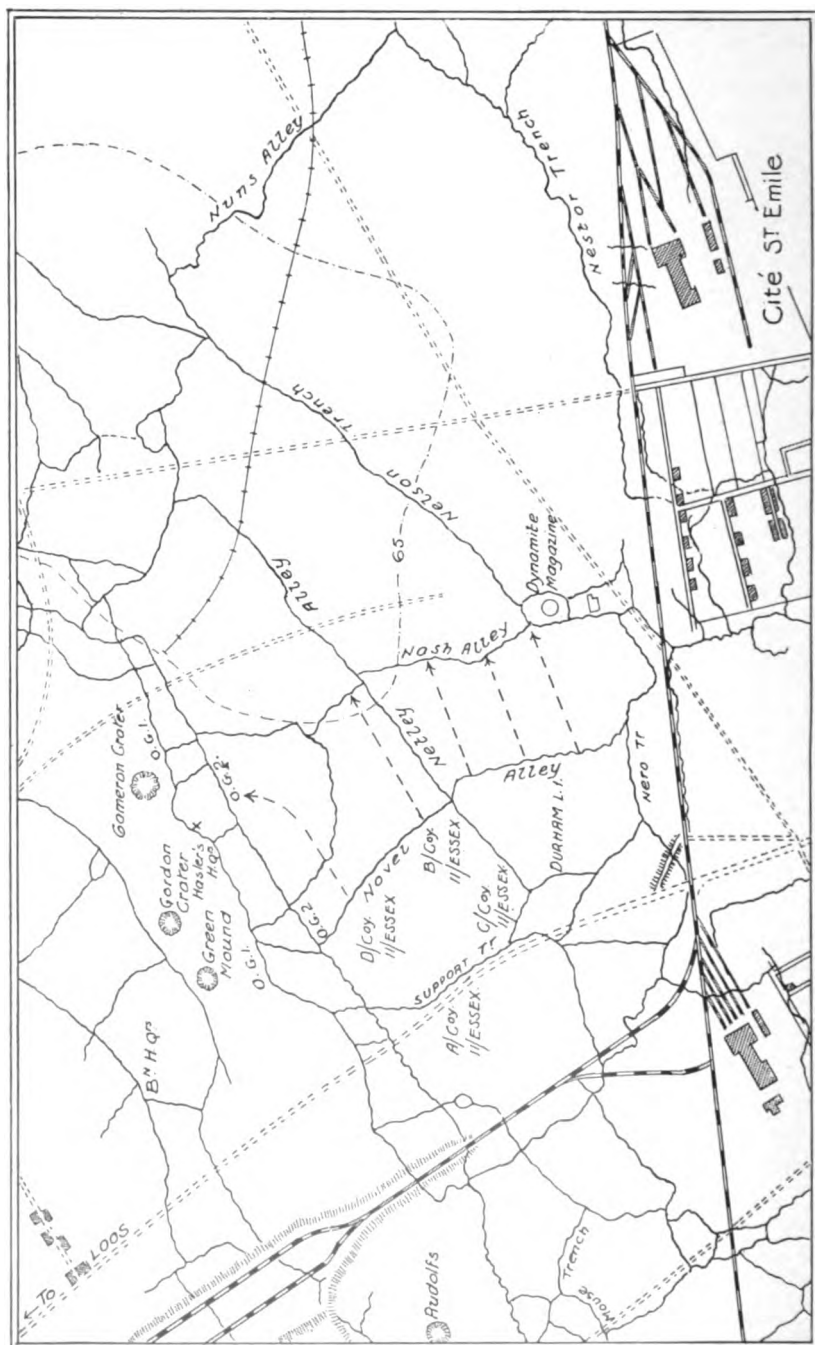
To this period belong a trio of incidents contributed by Corporal G. W. Chase: "One communication trench fed the sector in front of Cité St. Auguste. The German artillery had been occupied in strafing it all morning; the telephone wires ran down this trench, and the wires were reduced to a state of chaos. During a lull in the storm the linesmen from every conceivable unit were busy repairing them, a long line of men, feverishly engaged in snaffling anybody's wire that lay handy in a frantic attempt to get their own in order. Our own line was *non est*, due to the strafe and the snaffling. . . . What was one to do? Along came a brand new Artillery Forward Observation officer and his signaller, stalking past majestically and rather contemptuous of the frantic evidences of the P.B.I.'s agonies;

Both your Brigadier and Divisional Commander tell me you made the attack with magnificent courage. You carried right on to the second line, and you did everything that we asked you to do, and I am convinced of what your Brigadier tells me, that you left very little behind you of what you found there. Men, it is a thing of which you can be justly proud and which not only brings credit upon yourselves, your Regiment and your Division, but also is of very great value to your country. You have something more for yourselves—you have absolute certainty and moral courage that you are better than the German soldier when you meet him in the open. Then it is a good thing, men, a very good thing, to get out of these trenches with their deadening influences. You must all know yourselves, that to win this war we have to fight it to a finish in the open, and it is these attacks which give us the will and power to fight that fight in open battles. Men, you all know—every Englishman is a thinking man—and you know that the side which is content to fight a defensive fight and never attack is the side that is to be beaten. I don't want to keep you all waiting any longer. I thank you very much for the work you have done and know that when we call upon you at other times to do great things, you will rise to the occasion."



*Air photograph showing the Loos Salient, looking North-East, together with the Double Crassier. Lens is on the right.
In the centre, is the Loos Crassier, at the extreme left of which is the town of Loos.*

(Imperial War Museum, Crown Copyright).



the spotless artillery signaller was reeling out brand new wire. They always did; where they got it from was a marvel. They went past. A little while elapsed. New wire . . . a matter of about two hundred yards, became mysteriously transferred from the F.O.O.'s line to the Battalion's. Result—perfect communication with Battalion headquarters and an irate F.O.O. The wire was too new to escape notice; its position too obvious to leave any doubt as to the culprit. At Battalion headquarters an angry Artillery officer poured out his grievance to a sympathetic Colonel, who, in turn, poured out his wrath upon a trembling Battalion signaller. Departure of F.O.O. mollified. Signaller awaits his doom. Colonel: 'Is that one of the tricks of the trade, signaller?' 'Yes, sir.' Collapse of Colonel in laughter; departure of signaller, relieved." The next has little of humour about it, but much of tragedy: "'Cheer-i-oh, you blokes,' a voice calls down the dug-out steps. 'On my way up to BBD (a signal station),' 'Cheer-i-oh!' and the splash of feet through the mud. I go upstairs for some reason. A stretcher! . . . Five minutes had elapsed. . . The voice was stilled for ever that had called down the steps, 'Cheer-i-oh'." The third tells of the unexpected which so often occurs in war: "Lancashire Farm lay in the support line. About two a.m. the wire was broken between us and the front. A tired and disgruntled signaller, half asleep, goes in search of the break. No sign yet. On he goes. Splash, up to his neck in a 'Minnie' hole. He proceeds, more wrathful than ever. Still no sign of a break. He arrives at the dug-out. . . The operator sleeps peacefully, the 'phones strapped to his head. Fireworks ensue and threats of 'Shot at dawn.' The chorus is swelled by the other stations who have now arrived. . . A brew of tea follows, however, and all is well."

STIFF FIGHTING IN NASH ALLEY.

The line was probed on April 10th by the 1st West Yorks, on the Essex right, to see if the enemy was still there. He was, and showed no intention of withdrawing. On the 18th the 1st Leicesters raided the trenches and found the Germans in possession. The next day the Essex were relieved and went back to Mazingarbe. The respite was short, for the 11th, still tired from their eight days in the line, were sent with the 14th D.L.I. to the 16th Infantry Brigade and the two battalions carried out a combined attack on April 22nd from Novel Alley, known to the Battalion as the fight for Nash Alley. Each battalion provided two companies, the intention being to capture Nash Alley and Dynamite Magazine, lying to the left of Cité St. Emile. Two companies of the 14th D.L.I. were to attack on the right and two of the 11th Essex on the left ("B" Company, Captain A. K. Fison, and "D" Company, Lieut. S. E. Silver). The dividing line between the battalions was Netley Trench, which was

inclusive to the Essex. The Essex had "B" Company on the right, with their right flank 50 yards south of Netley Trench, and "D" Company on the left. Each Company (70 strong) had a frontage of 170 yards. The advance was to be in two waves at a distance of 50 yards, the first wave going right through to the objective. When the artillery barrage dropped on Nash Alley at zero (8 a.m.) the first wave was to leave the trench and was expected to reach Nash Alley four minutes later, the artillery having crept forward at fifty yards per minute to a line east of Nash Alley. "C" Company was to move into Novel Alley as soon as "B" and "D" Companies had gone over. "A" Company was in reserve in the old British front line.

On the right, "B" Company reached their objective in Nash Alley, together with the 14th D.L.I. on their right. They encountered opposition from a post in Netley Alley and also at the junction of Nash and Netley Alleys, suffering about 20 casualties and capturing a machine gun after killing the crew. This machine gun was later sent to Battalion headquarters, carried down by a German deserter under escort. On the left, with "D" Company, matters did not go so well and it is difficult to find out the exact details of actually what did happen, but the following account has been gathered from the stories of survivors. The Germans held obstinately to a post containing two machine guns near the junction of O.G.1. and Nash Alley (they possibly had another post near the junction of O.G.2 and Nash Alley) and the fire from these machine guns not only caused casualties in "D" Company, but also had the effect of drawing the right of the Company half-left, with the result that a gap was made between "B" and "D" Companies, and in the ensuing fight for the German post (or posts) the right of "D" Company never reached Nash Alley. The fact that at 9.30 a.m. a German bombing attack, which was driven off, came in on the left of "B" Company shows that at this time none of "D" Company were in Nash Alley. Bombing attacks by "D" Company were made on the German post (near O.G.1) and one of the machine guns was put out of action, but when their supply of bombs was exhausted the survivors of "D" Company could do no more than create blocks in O.G.1 and O.G.2 to prevent the Germans filtering back; a number of Germans are known to have been killed and five prisoners were taken. Thus from about 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. the situation was that "B" Company were on their objective in Nash Alley and that "D" Company were holding blocks in O.G.1 and O.G.2 with the stoutest hearted men; the remainder had probably drifted back to Novel Alley. Directly after zero, "C" Company had moved up from Support Trench into Novel Alley and a platoon of this Company was brought up along O.G.1 to reinforce "D" Company; this platoon unfortunately lost its bombing squad from the German artillery fire, which up to 10 a.m. played continuously up and down this

trench. Three platoons of "A" Company from the Battalion reserve were then brought up; one under Lieut. Martinson was sent to "B" Company, one to "D" Company and the third to "C" Company to replace the platoon already sent by this Company to "D" Company. The German artillery, which had opened up at 8.4 a.m. on Novel Alley, O.G.1, continued heavily till 10 a.m., after which only spasmodic shelling occurred till 4 p.m. Throughout the morning supplies of S.A.A. and bombs were sent up, but many of the dumps were destroyed by shell-fire. At 4 p.m. German retaliation commenced with redoubled vigour. All calibres opened upon Nash Alley, Novel Alley, Netley Alley O.G.1 and other trenches, also upon Loos and North Street. Half an hour later the tornado lifted from Nash Alley and strong bombing attacks came down Netley Alley and Nash Alley, and also frontally over the open, forcing "B" and "D" Company blocking parties to retire. Casualties were considerable and at 5 p.m. only 60 men of the Battalion were holding Novel Alley, to whom a platoon of K.S.L.I. were sent, and a company of the K.S.L.I. and a pioneer party to Support Trench. Lieut. Reeves, 6th Machine Gun Company, also occupied Support Trench with a machine gun and assisted to hold the right of the line. "D" Company were also much helped by a Stokes mortar and Field Artillery, which barraged the German front line and prevented an attack from this quarter. The casualties to the Battalion in this action were 12 officers and about 220 other ranks killed, wounded and missing. Of the former, 2nd Lieut. George Frederic Deane, attached to the 18th T.M. Battery, was killed. Each company went into action that day 70 strong on an average.

Colonel Spring's reminiscences lack nothing in point and emphasis: "We got our objective, except on the left, where the Germans held on pertinaciously. General Marden, in his 'History of the 6th Division,' is entirely wrong when he states that the 11th Essex were unable to get on. I remember receiving a message from Captain Fison shortly after he had taken his objective giving me the situation and written as neatly and clearly as if he had been sitting in his office in England. Now Nash Alley was practically on the summit of Hill 70 overlooking Loos and the Germans had no intention of losing their observation over this area without a hard struggle, so at 4 p.m. they turned on every gun they could to blow us out and then attacked both us and the 14th D.L.I. in masses, coming at us from the front and from the left portion of Nash Alley, which we had not been able to capture. Both Essex and D.L.I. were driven back to Novel Alley and it is surprising that there were any survivors. Luckily for us, the Germans did not attempt to capture Novel Alley, for we had precious little to stop them with if they had. I remember trying to organize our remnants in Novel Alley and was glad to see some K.S.L.I. arrive to reinforce us. I was particularly struck by the splendid work done this day by Major Hasler, my second-

in-command, Captain Fison, Lieutenants Silver and Martinson. Hasler throughout the operation was in touch with the leading company commanders. His quick grasp of every situation was the greatest help to all of us. Before this I had found out that he was a first-class disciplinarian and organizer, and on this day he showed us what a fine leader he was in the field." The three first-named were subsequently awarded Military Crosses and Colonel Spring the D.S.O. Lieut. Martinson was also strongly recommended for the M.C., but the decoration was not awarded.

Captain A. K. Fison's extracts from his diary give a graphic picture of the happenings on the right, being full of interesting detail :—

April 18th.—Turned out to watch a raid at two in the morning. Nothing much to learn or see beyond the usual display of rockets and trench mortars on the part of the enemy. A lot of heavy stuff began flying about our own trench, so retired downstairs before very long. We found in the morning one direct hit had been obtained with a 5.9, which knocked the trench in. By a quarter to four things were practically quiet again. At half-past five a tremendous noise arose on the right for some reason unknown, and we got some more shells. No casualties in "B" Company, luckily, but the front line companies had some. The rest of the morning was quiet. A little after two a wire from headquarters came through to send an officer and four N.C.O.'s to Loos to take over the Enclosure, followed soon after by a wire to all companies to the effect that relief will take place to-night. . . . So it looks as if we're going to spend the next few days, when we're really due for a rest, in Loos. It is very very bad luck on the men, for they have had a really hard time lately. Theak went across to take over. About four in the afternoon the C.O. walked in and told us it was a wash-out; we are to stay on for the present in the reserve line. I had just time to stop the party going to take over.

April 19th.—Nothing very particular happened during the day. A dud 5.9 landed in the trench during the morning and caused some amusement. The weather is fine and warm, and a good deal of artillery activity going on on both sides. In the evening we were relieved at last, and by a battalion of the 71st Brigade from our left. The relief was late in coming off, as, for some reason of their own, they hadn't left their billets till half-past nine. One of the officers of the incoming company turned out to be an acquaintance of mine from the Army School; he appeared very flourishing.

April 20th.—We arrived in Mazingarbe at three in the morning after a safe and uneventful march out. We are now under the orders of the 16th Brigade and likely to have some active fighting in the near future, as this Brigade has been advancing a bit in front of Loos on our right. Saw the men comfortably

settled in, had a cup of tea, and was in bed rather before four. Was woken up two hours later by an orderly with the information that we're going up to the front line this very evening and there is to be an officers' conference at ten o'clock; that didn't keep me awake very long. Rather rotten luck, as we have just had twenty-one days continuously in the trenches and have earned a bit of rest. Got up in time for the conference, but not in time for my breakfast! Detailed orders for the move were issued. The company commanders are to start off almost at once to reconnoitre the line to be taken over. "B" and "D" are to be in the front line in the trenches lately taken from the enemy, with "A" in our old front line and "C" in support. On leaving the conference at eleven I had a rapid breakfast, made the necessary arrangements about kit, etc., and left Perkins to do the necessary work in regard to the Company. Newman got me a pair of Tommies' trousers from the Quartermaster, which I put on as a final disguise, and at half-past twelve I started off with Martinson and four of my N.C.O.'s for Maroc, where we should pick up guides. On the way there I noticed the first wild-flowers of spring—several patches of coltsfoot. We found the guides, provided by the Buffs, waiting, and they took us to their battalion headquarters in the Solent Tunnel, right under where the old Tower Bridge used to stand at the end of the Loos Crassier. Found the C.O. and Hasler already arrived, but no one as yet from the other companies. The Buffs and Shropshires are apparently mixed up together in the line, both having suffered pretty heavy casualties and being, in consequence, weak in numbers. We presently went on to the headquarters of the Shropshires, while the Colonel, having made his arrangements, returned to Mazingarbe. At this time the Boche began to amuse himself with 5.9's rather profusely, so we stayed underground a bit till the excitement was over. Silver and Mudge arrived shortly after, both having had some close shaves. On emerging when things were quiet again about five we found there had been a number of hits on the trench, which was pretty well knocked in. Evidently it is a most unhealthy place for headquarters. The guides now took us up to the companies we were to relieve. We crossed the old No Man's Land along a railway cutting in the Crassier itself, there not having been time yet to finish a proper communication trench, though one is in progress. Conditions of life in the trenches we are to take over are just like those I got accustomed to on the Somme last autumn; but the trenches even more knocked about, both sides having very powerful artillery. In fact, in some places the trench is practically non-existent, and one has to walk in full view of Fritz if he only took the trouble to notice the fact. Company headquarters is a small cut in the side of a trench, more or less protected from the weather by one piece of corrugated iron and several boards, but not by any means proof against whizz-bangs. There was not much

reconnoitring to do and I was glad to sit down to a little refreshment. There was now nothing to do but wait for the relief of the company at night; Fritz, for a wonder, was quiet during the evening. The company commenced to arrive about midnight in charge of Perkins, who, when he had handed over to me, returned to Mazingarbe.

April 21st.—We were pretty heavily shelled all day, and, there being no cover, a good many casualties were the result. Knight was rather badly wounded and Joad went down with shellshock. One Lewis gun was smashed and we had another sent up from "C" Company to replace it. Another officer, Hearst, was also sent up from "A" Company to help me. At five in the afternoon the 14th D.L.I. had a show on our right. They managed to get a piece of trench by means of a converging bombing attack and were quite successful in their objective. Altogether I spent a most uncomfortable day, finding the simple life under these circumstances not much to my taste. In the evening the Colonel came round and warned me to make arrangements for a possible attack by us to-morrow morning; he had no official information of this, but considered it likely. As events turned out he was right. A minor inconvenience at this time was the loss of my trench kit. All the kits were hastily dumped off the limber owing to shellfire and mine was never seen again.

April 22nd (Sunday).—An eventful day in the history of the Battalion. Half an hour after midnight operation orders came round for an attack at eight in the morning, not very long notice. "B" and "D" Companies are to go over on the right and left respectively, and the 14th D.L.I. will go over on our right at the same time. The remaining hours of darkness were spent in getting ready for the show. Bombs, tools and ammunition were brought up by carrying parties and dumps formed close to my headquarters. Unfortunately, the tools were not nearly enough to go round. When day broke it was a lovely spring morning, with not a cloud in sight, and after seven o'clock hardly a shot was being fired, though a lot of aeroplanes of both sides were in sight. The men had their breakfast and an issue of rum, and by half-past seven we were in our position of assembly. We were so weak in numbers no aeroplane could possibly have told we were assembled for an attack; it must have looked like a normal holding of the line. At eight precisely our barrage opened and the show started. We went over in two waves; there was a certain amount of opposition, but after a little fighting we got into our objective all right, as did also the D.L.I., and started to consolidate the position, though a good deal handicapped by the shortage of tools, which, however, couldn't be helped. Theak unfortunately sustained a nasty wound in the advance; Hearst, however, was all right and did well, capturing a machine gun in perfect condition and killing the

crew. We found that on our left "D" Company had not gained their objective, so I strengthened the left of my front to make some sort of defensive flank. Our contact aeroplane came over to find out our position, but I could not signal it, not having any flares. I sent back urgent messages for bombs and ammunition, of which we hadn't nearly enough, but none came back all day. It was hard work digging in, the trench having been thoroughly knocked about by our guns; in one or two places it was hardly recognizable at all and our men went over it in the attack without seeing it at all, and I had to call them back. The Boche artillery had not annoyed us at all as we were going over, but came down heavily behind us and went on for a long while. A good many of our own shells, however, fell short and I was slightly wounded in the face by one of them; nothing serious. We got a few prisoners, most of the garrison running away after they had put up a bit of a scrap. We were weak now, due to rather heavy casualties, and a platoon of "A" Company came up under Martinson, who was a very great help all day. By ten o'clock things had quietened down a lot, and not much shelling was in progress on either side. One small bombing attack was made on our left, which we easily beat off, mainly by the use of the Boche's own bombs, a Lewis gun also assisting to keep the enemy heads down. Paid a visit to the D.L.I. company commander on my right and found him most comfortably installed in a most beautiful dug-out, with lots of grub and luxuries of all sorts; he kindly provided me with a few Boche cigars, which I took back and distributed. At a quarter to four a Boche deserter came in. Martinson speaks a bit of German and we had a most amusing quarter of an hour's talk with him. He gave cigarettes to some of the fellows near and was generally very affable! Presently we sent him back to headquarters and made him carry the captured machine gun, which we hadn't so far been able to remove, my runner, Hazel, acting as escort. Now came the tragedy of the day. About four o'clock a truly tremendous bombardment opened, falling mostly behind us on our old front and support lines and right down as far as Battalion headquarters. Quite enough came our way and, as I afterwards discovered, both my flanking posts were knocked out. At half-past four we suddenly found ourselves the object of a heavy attack in front and being bombed from both flanks. We were in no position to resist effectively, so retired across the open, suffering casualties on the way from rifle fire from the flank. Martinson and I were the last to arrive in our original line and found it practically empty, except for killed and wounded in the dug-outs. We arranged some sort of temporary defence, after which I left Martinson in charge and went back to try to find some troops to hold the line and report the matter to headquarters. For a while the Battalion was completely disorganized, but after a time we got the front line held with mixed parties of two of our

own companies, together with detachments of Shropshires, Bedfords and York and Lancasters. Fortunately, the Boche was satisfied with what he had already done and did not try to rush this line. If he had tried it at once he might have got it easily. Things gradually settled down, however, and got quieter, and by six o'clock the line was decently held again. A company of the Shropshires came into the support line and a relief was arranged to take place at night. Tea was brought round at dusk, which cheered the fellows up greatly. A fair amount of shelling was kept up during the evening, but nothing in comparison with what had gone before. Not many officers were now left in the line; in fact, there was only one each of "A," "B" and "C," though "D" were better off, having three.

April 23rd.—About one in the morning we were relieved by the Buffs, a process which did not take very long. The various parties marched back to Battalion headquarters, where guides were met, who led us to the Solent Tunnel. Here the men were sorted out into their companies and settled down for a rest. The tunnel is not very commodious, but has at least the advantage of being safe. We have for the present two messes only, Silver, Weatherdon, Scott, Hearst and myself being the guests of headquarters mess. After having a hot drink we all turned in and the fact of having no blanket or pillow did not keep me awake very long. I was up again about half-past ten. Borrowed articles for a wash and shave, issued rum to the sadly depleted company, and had breakfast. My senior N.C.O. now with the company is Lance-Corporal Scurrell, no one of full rank being left. On making out a roll of the Company he found the grand total was twenty-four. Including every one of those who had actually been in the fighting there must have been about sixteen. And we had marched in two days before ninety strong. Owing to the scratch on my face the M.O. insisted on putting my name in the casualty report; so I had to write home and inform the family, which I should not otherwise have done. Shall also have to put another strip of gold braid on my sleeve.

"We were at a loss to account for the constant call for bombs in this engagement," wrote Lieut. T. G. Murray, "as a large supply had been sent up by special carrying parties from time to time after our attack. In the end I went up (with Mortimer, my batman) to see if the bombs could be traced. It was as unpleasant a journey as could well be imagined, as we had to go through the barrage the enemy was putting down to prevent us sending up reinforcements. Anyhow, we kept warm without trying to do so, and didn't waste time on the way—along by the railway and, I think, up O.G.1. We found the C.O. in a dug-out crowded out with wounded and shell-shocked, many even on the stairs. He and Major Hasler were seeing what could be done to clear up the situation. No signs of bombs there, so we went on to Nash Alley, part of which was held by the Germans and part by

ourselves, with a sandbag block between. Then along Nash Alley to the right some little way, where our fellows—a very few of them—were hanging on precariously in deafening shellfire and with very little shelter. I've never seen quite so many shell-shocked as on this occasion, but there is small wonder, because the bombing and shelling were terrific. It seemed wonderful not to get hit and it was a comfort to be on the move—somewhat on the idea that by running in a shower of rain one must surely dodge some of the drops. We didn't find the bombs either!

The following were the commanding officer's conclusions: “(a) The left company was forced back from Nash Alley, through unexpected resistance in German front line. (b) It is imperative that if the attack is to be carried out by troops who have just done a long spell of trench duty they should be relieved *at once* after gaining their objective by really fresh troops. We had just completed a continuous tour of 21 days in the front line and Village Line. In the latter men lived in trenches which were daily shelled and were, in most cases, up to the knees in mud and slush. On the night of 20th April we were relieved after a spell of eight days in the front line, the last company reaching Mazingarbe at 5 a.m. On the night of 21st April we moved up into the 16th I.B. front line and on 22nd April we attacked. Everyone realized this was a special effort and I think the spirit of the officers and men was splendid, but when the stimulus of the attack had worn off there is no doubt they were physically all done to a turn. (c) To hold on we must have more counter-battery work. Our artillery were outnumbered by the German heavy artillery and until we can neutralize this fire our infantry will simply be crumped out after obtaining their objectives. To ask infantry to hold on without sufficient artillery support is simply asking for trouble.”

The Battalion, on relief, went to the Solent Tunnel, under the Loos Crassier, which was occupied for the evening, as stated by Captain Fison above. The Tunnel was an object of great interest. “In these chalky parts mining and counter-mining is a big factor in the fighting,” wrote an Essex officer. “At first the Germans had it all their own way and blew up our trenches with the men in them. The miners start a sap from their own ground and then dig a tunnel right under No Man's Land until they are beneath the enemy trench. They stock the end of the tunnel with explosive, connect a detonator, retire to a safe distance, press a switch and up she goes! A large crater is formed, the far edge of which is manned by the infantry. If this is done at intervals and the craters joined laterally, it will be seen that we take possession piecemeal of the enemy's trench, causing them to retire a few hundred yards. Then the Tunnel workings are abandoned to any use. We sometimes lead our telephone lines along them if the direction is right and exits suitable. The places are infested with rats. The other

day, when walking along one with an electric torch, I came across a real old rat, so ancient and decrepit that he couldn't run away, but sat blinking in the light, and I hadn't the heart to 'down' him. At Solent Tunnel the underground workings were very elaborate. There was a large chamber rigged up with hundreds of wire bunks. I don't know how many men could live there, but I think a battalion easily. There was also accommodation for aid posts, kitchens, etc. We found this place of great use at times during gas shelling, when it could be made very nearly gas-proof, and, of course, it was absolutely safe during an ordinary bombardment."

The next day (April 24th) the Battalion went to billets in Les Brebis, coming again under the direction of the 18th Brigade. Hereabouts Lieut. T. G. Murray noted the humour displayed in the names of dug-outs. "Our Aid-Post dug-out has a label fastened over the entrances, 'Blood and Iodine Villa,' while the entrance to a tunnel is named 'Baby Mine.' Over the entrance to another dug-out is the inscription 'Home, Sweet Home, where they treat us best and we grumble most.' I came across one place called 'The Cribber's Retreat,' and, on enquiry, was told, 'A cribber is a bloke what moans'—in other words, a grumbler. The reference to a mine sap reminds me of the Australian Tunnellers who used to work near Loos. These gentlemen had very nonchalant ways of going to and from their work in the trenches. They just streamed across the open in full view of the enemy. In a general way they were too scattered to be worth shelling, I suppose, but now and again a salvo of whizz-bangs would be sent over to remind them that there was a war on. Then, by irony of fate, as likely as not, one of us, the poor old infantry, laboriously trudging up a neighbouring communication trench, would be hit, and the Australians would get off scot-free. Our tunnellers appeared to use the same easy-going methods in their mining operations. The Germans did beautiful work, lining all their tunnels with millions of short planks, which they brought up specially cut and dove-tailed. Our men just put in props and supports now and again, which let them get along much faster, so that they generally won in any counter-mining race for position."

The 11th Essex were in the Village Line on April 27th and two days later were in the front trench to the right of their former position, Bis Right, Inniskillen Redoubt, with a strength of 23 officers and 447 other ranks. The ground was so dry that all ranks quite appreciated the fact that they had not to wear gumboots. On May Day the Battalion extended their responsibility to the right, so that the frontage ran from Seaforth Alley to Boyau 15, both exclusive. Cameron Crater was found to be unoccupied by Lieut. J. N. D. Keys on May 2nd and three days later 2nd Lieut. W. A. H. Moore was killed by a rifle shot whilst in charge of a covering party.

The Battalion was in billets at Les Brebis on May 8th and then marched to Hesdigneul for a rest. On May 14th the signallers carried out a tactical scheme with aeroplanes. This was the first time any of them had done it. "Able trained and led by their officer, Lieut. T. G. Murray," wrote Colonel Spring, "our communications in their hands were always safe. I have mentioned the boy who in our raid of the 24th March would not let his officer down. A good signaller had to be a stout-hearted man, for he had to go out and repair his wire when broken, no matter how heavy the hostile shelling might be. Then with the signallers we had the runners, men who at all times of the day or night had to go out and deliver their messages and take no heed of the shelling, the machine gun bullet or the murkiness of the night. I have been in a dug-out when the shells were bursting on top and their concussion was extinguishing the candles, our only light, and watched our runners sitting by, the next for duty all ready dressed to go out. Then at a word from the Adjutant up they would jump, take their message and go out into the dark without a word, but with a smile on their faces, sometimes going off singly and other times in pairs. In these days with the war so far back we are apt to forget this wonderful spirit of our men, which cast away all thought of self and put duty before all. The lads of to-day little know what splendid soldiers their fathers and elder brothers were. There are two other sections I must mention here and they were the transport men, under Lieut. Featherstonhaugh, and our Sapper squad, under Lieut. Williams, himself an old R.E. Night after night the transport had to bring up rations in long columns, with vehicle packed behind vehicle along roads continuously being shelled by the Germans, never knowing when the guns would open up on them and also knowing that they could not scatter and take cover in the nearest ditch, but would have to stay with their vehicle and look after their horses. It took a brave man to do it. The Sapper squad was formed of elderly men who were more at home with pick and shovel than with rifle and bayonet. This squad was always pushed up into the worst trenches, where work was urgently required and the way they used to turn these bad places into respectable trenches in a few hours was remarkable."

The men of the 11th Essex were back again in the line on May 18th, when they went into Gun Trench, with a strength of 16 officers and 522 other ranks. On May 24th the 46th Division attacked Nash Alley, aided by a smoke screen produced on the Essex front. The wind was in a suitable direction and the smoke undoubtedly diverted several guns from the point from which the 46th Division attacked. The latter took Nash Alley and 28 prisoners of the 153rd Regiment. The next day, however, a different tale was told. The German artillery thundered all round the captured position. One gun firing on Loos was noticed

to be in position north of Hulluch. At noon the Germans recaptured the trench. "The attack of the 46th Division," Colonel Spring wrote, "had the same objectives as we had on 22nd April and exactly the same experience. They took their objectives more easily than we did owing to better co-operation and more help by other units. The next morning they were blown out of it by a heavy concentration of artillery in exactly the same way as we had been." For the last few days of May the Battalion was in billets in Les Brebis and on May 31st took over once again their old sector, with a strength of 22 officers and 594 other ranks.

2nd Lieut. K. W. J. Moore and 20 other ranks attempted to raid the German front line early on June 4th, but owing to a mistake the barrage started behind them as they lay in No Man's Land, and then lifted to the objective, where it remained. During the night of the 3rd-4th a working party of "B" Company was assailed by aerial darts and shells, so that altogether it was a costly night. One officer (Lieut. B. R. T. Hill) and four other ranks were killed and 13 wounded. The 2nd D.L.I. attempted a raid with two officers and 51 other ranks from the Essex front on June 6th, but failed to enter the trenches owing to a hostile barrage coming down at the wrong moment. The 46th Division were still concerned with Nash Alley, for they raided it on the night of June 8th and captured eight prisoners. A smoke screen was produced by the Battalion bombing officer with "P" bombs and smoke candles. From Les Brebis the Battalion went into divisional reserve at Hesdigneul, on June 11th, where it obtained third place for infantry transport and won the tug-of-war in the divisional horse show. The weather was very hot when the Essex returned to Brebis on June 15th. The Battalion went into the line on June 20th, occupying the sector from the junction of Cameron Alley with front line (inclusive) to Boyau 51 and Railway Alley (inclusive), with a strength of 19 officers and 514 other ranks. Two posts manned by "C" Company (Captain S. E. Silver) were raided by the enemy in conjunction with a trench mortar barrage early on June 24th, but they met with a watchful and vigorous defence and were soon driven off. Twelve other ranks were wounded and one missing. The curious fact was that the patrol of "C" Company which was in No Man's Land saw nothing of the enemy and it was noticed that in recent raids the hostile barrage was almost entirely produced by trench weapons, minnenwerfer and granatenwerfer. There was much hostile aerial activity, both with aeroplanes and balloons. That day the 16th Brigade carried out a daylight enterprise against Hulluch, helped by a successful smoke screen from the Essex line, arranged by Lieut. R. C. Cross. Over 400 smoke candles and "P" bombs were used to make the screen, which lasted half an hour and attracted the attention of the German trench mortars. The Battalion Chaplain (Barlow Poole) had a nasty



LIEUT F. B. WEARNE, V.C.

experience on his way to visit the line one day in June. He had started from the transport lines in the morning and there was some hostile shelling as he was on his journey. As shells were falling uncomfortably near, he took shelter in the entrance to a dug-out. A direct hit caused the roof to fall in on him, so that he was buried up to the neck and unable to move. There he had to stay until the late afternoon, when the Quartermaster, happening to pass that way, found him and got a party to dig him out.

LIEUT. F. B. WEARNE WINS THE VICTORIA CROSS.

When the Battalion was temporarily under the command of Major E. V. Manger, a raid was carried out (June 28th, 1917) which resulted in the posthumous award of the V.C. to one of the officers concerned. The enterprise was in conjunction with the 2nd D.L.I., who were to act in a similar manner on the right. The personnel, taken from "C" Company, was commanded by Captain S. E. Silver and consisted of three parties—"A" (Lieut. M. R. Robertson) of 80 other ranks, organized in three squads; "B" (2nd Lieut. F. B. Wearne), of 20 other ranks, in two squads; "C," one N.C.O. and six men. Total strength was three officers and 80 other ranks, with one officer and 20 other ranks of 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company. The place of assembly was a large dug-out at the junction of Scots Alley and the Reserve Line. From this point Party "A" were to attack from between the Hump and Cameron Crater, entering the enemy's trench at its junction with Nash Alley. The right squad was to mop up the trench south to the block; the centre squad to hold the junction of Nash Alley and the front line, collect as many prisoners as possible and demolish dug-outs; the left squad was to bomb up the trench north towards the right squad of Party "B" and form a block in the enemy's communication trench, holding it at all costs until an hour after zero. Party "B" were to attack from north of the Hump, entering the enemy trench north and south of the Sap. The right squad was to deal with opposition from the post in the sap and then bomb along the enemy front line in a southerly direction. The left squad was to enter the enemy's trench north of the sap, clear the trench and form a block facing north to protect the left flank. "C" party, at five minutes after zero, was to cross the right squad's block (Party "A") and rush the German block opposite. They were to be followed by a party from the Australian Tunnelling Company. The intention was to take prisoners, obtain identification and destroy dug-outs and mineshafts, also to divert attention from the operations of the 46th Division on the right. Parties "A" and "B" were to withdraw simultaneously across No Man's Land between the Hump and Cameron Crater at an hour after zero upon the sounding of short whistle blasts, and rendezvous in the dug-out at the junction of Scots Alley and Reserve Line. Continuous fire from Lewis guns was to be directed upon the

German trenches between Boyaux 46 and 51 to cover the raiders' passage across No Man's Land and also again when the withdrawal was taking place. A party of one officer and 12 other ranks, including Lewis gun teams, was held as reinforcement at the block in the trench occupied by the Essex, and Captain Silver also had under his personal command twelve bombers, who were to be used in emergency, but they were not called upon. He also had under his orders the C.S.M., four orderlies and four stretcher-bearers.

The raiding party had had much preliminary training at Les Brebis, the instruction embracing the idea that the leaders might become casualties and the 2nd D.L.I. might not be able to join up, assumptions which were justified by events. Personal reconnaissance of the ground was undertaken by all the leaders beforehand. The arrangements for a box barrage worked well, the only hitch being the premature opening of the Stokes gun barrage, but fortunately no serious mishap followed, although the German guns spoke heavily in reply. At two and a half minutes after zero (7.10 p.m.) Party "A" left their trenches on the right of the Hump and entered the enemy's line at the junction with Nash Alley. Party "B" at the same time started left of the Hump and made for the sap in the German line. The right squad of "A" party rushed the block in the enemy trench, captured the post and blew up the dug-outs, to which the occupants of the post had retreated after they had refused to surrender. The centre squad held the junction of Nash Alley with the front line and as the 2nd D.L.I. were not able to attain their objective on this flank, they occupied the post for an hour against repeated counter-attacks. Meanwhile, the left squad was mopping-up the trench in a northerly direction to Party "B." The right squad of the latter met the left squad and joined forces. They were continually attacked from the support line, but held the enemy back with rifle fire. The left squad of Party "B" made a block in the enemy's trench and held it against strong opposition. This proved the most difficult point to hold and of the officer and 15 other ranks employed, only one escaped unscathed. Lieut. Wearne was killed whilst driving back the enemy in a daring flank movement across the top. Party "C," which had started two and a half minutes later, crossed Party "A's" block and cleared a way through the enemy's block. The German post there had been already taken and the Tunnellers, protected by "C" Party, carried out their task of exploring and destroying the mine shafts. The German wire was a difficult obstacle and the trench proved to be a wide ditch much broken by artillery fire. Exactly an hour after the advance took place the order to retire was given, the rearguards having to resist much pressure by the enemy. The casualties were two officers killed (2nd Lieut. Frank Bernard Wearne and 2nd Lieut. Douglas Jolland

Rew) and one wounded, and ten other ranks killed and 80 wounded, with six missing believed killed; a total of three officers and 45 other ranks, nearly 50 per cent. of the personnel engaged. Lieut. Wearne had been attached from the 3rd Battalion and Lieut. Rew from the 5th Battalion.

"Our casualties," reported Captain Silver, "were heavy, but it was estimated that the enemy's were much more severe. There was hard fighting on the left flank, and at Nash Alley, where the 2nd D.L.I. were engaged. At both places we held our own, inflicting severe casualties. Two occupied dug-outs were blown out, one containing at least twelve Germans. The enemy lost several others in a series of counter-attacks across the open from the support line. These were met by rifle fire. Captain F. P. Freeman, M.C., R.A.M.C., made excellent medical arrangements, which worked very well. Signalling broke down, for the wire was cut and smoke prevented the signal lamp from being seen." He went on to say that bombs and ammunition were in ample supply, but the time for holding the trench—an hour—was too long, the greater number of casualties occurring in the last 15 minutes. The enemy had thinned out his line to avoid the raid, holding the flanks only. The men in the centre side-slipped and sheltered in dug-outs, some of which were effectively bombed.

The report of the O.C. Tunnelling Party (Captain Alex Sanderson M.C.) was that three mine shafts were found and destroyed with gun cotton and ammonal, together with two dug-outs wrecked by mobile charges. It was impossible to examine the lower workings of the mines, as the entrances had been bombed and were full of smoke. The casualties were one killed and 18 wounded. He added, "I cannot praise too highly the excellent behaviour of the infantry engaged on the raid, under cover of which the above operation was carried out. Praise is also deserved for the very excellent shooting in the barrages put up by the artillery."

In a covering note to Captain Silver's report, Major Manger stated that the work of the raid commander "in training the N.C.O.'s beforehand, and in practising the operation at Les Brebis, also his conduct of the operation from the Essex front line, very largely contributed to its success."

When Colonel Spring returned from leave he put in a recommendation for the award of the V.C. to Lieut. Wearne, which was granted, much to the satisfaction of all ranks. The terms in which the award was made, under date August 5th, 1917, were: "For superb courage, leadership and self-sacrifice. On 28th June, 1917, 2nd Lieut. Wearne was in command of two sections on the left of a raiding party, whose objective was the German front line, east of Loos. He led his men into the objective against opposition and by his magnificent example and daring they held on to the German trench for one hour according to

orders. Throughout the hour they were repeatedly counter-attacked, from their left down the trench and from their front over the open. Grasping the fact that if the left flank went, the men would have to give way, 2nd Lieut. Wearne, at a moment when the attack was being heavily pressed, and when matters were most critical, leapt on the parapet and, followed by the left section, ran along the top of the trench, firing and throwing bombs at the enemy. This unexpected and daring manœuvre threw the enemy back in disorder. Whilst on the top 2nd Lieut. Wearne was severely wounded, but refused to leave his men. He remained in the trench directing operations, organizing the defence and encouraging all. Just before the order to withdraw 2nd Lieut. Wearne was severely hit for the second time and when being brought away was hit for the third time and killed. His tenacity in remaining at his post, though severely wounded, and his magnificent fighting spirit enabled his men to hold on to the left flank; had this gone, the whole operation would have failed."

Major H. S. Roberts recalls that the evening prior to the raid a little party met in a café at Les Brebis, among others, Silver, Alexander, Fetherstonhaugh, Wearne and himself. They sampled boiled rabbit and vegetables, with poor wine. Before the party left for the line Major Roberts had a chat with Silver and Wearne, in particular upon the fact that the latter's brother (Captain Keith Morris Wearne, May 21st, 1917), who was killed with the 1st Battalion, had been temporarily attached to the 2nd Battalion from Sandhurst whilst waiting to proceed to India, when Major Roberts was R.S.M. Prior to leaving on his last fight, Lieut. Wearne handed over a snapshot photograph of himself which Major Roberts prizes very much.

The Battalion was relieved on June 30th and went to billets in Les Brebis, where Colonel Spring resumed command on July 2nd. The Essex went into the Novel Alley sector, east of Loos, on July 7th, with two companies in the line, one in support and the fourth in Loos. The Germans blew a mine in the front line between the Essex and the 14th D.L.I. next day, but no damage was done and communication was established through the crater that night. The deduction was that the enemy were blowing in galleries and had no offensive intention. On July 9th an attempt to raid a post held by "A" Company near the junction of Novel and Netley Alleys was frustrated, for the enemy were seen by Lance-Corporal Mansfield, who opened fire with the Lewis guns and stopped them. Mansfield continued firing, although the bay he was in was destroyed by a shell. Another attempt to raid the same point was made in the early morning of July 11th. Whereas formerly the Germans came over in a line, they now worked down a disused trench on the right and in the darkness tried to rush the post. They were seen by the sentry, who was killed, but not before the alarm was given.

Hand-to-hand fighting ensued, as a result of which the Germans were driven off, leaving a wounded man of the 98rd R.I.R. behind. The Essex casualties were one killed and two wounded, the latter including Lance-Corporal Mansfield, who had distinguished himself two days before. The Battalion was unfeignedly glad to have the order to occupy billets in Les Brebis on July 15th, for the turns of duty had been very trying. In addition to raids, the hostile artillery and trench mortars (particularly the granatenwerfer) were very active. The locality of most of the posts was known, but good liaison work with the British artillery considerably lessened the risk after the first three days. The policy of retaliating with a larger expenditure of ammunition than that sent over proved effective and the Stokes mortars were always able to quieten the granatenwerfer.

The Battalion was taken to billets in Mingoval and Villers-Chatel on July 16th and then to Allouagne ten days later. Captain A. K. Fison and 150 other ranks attended a commemoration service on the third anniversary of the outbreak of the war, whilst 190 others had a less agreeable occupation in the afternoon when they were inoculated. On August 8th the Essex marched to Estree Cauchie, where the Battalion was very successful at the Brigade sports. The divisional gymkhana was held at Frevillers on August 14th. During this rest period Bombardier Wells, the well-known boxer, was attached to the Battalion and in the brigade boxing tournament the Essex did very well, getting five firsts. A few days before the Battalion had won the tug-of-war, the mile, the marathon and the veterans' race. The Essex went to Noeux-les-Mines on August 23rd and back to Les Brebis on August 26th, where, two days later, "B" Company proceeded to Loos for work in the trenches of Hill 70, which had been taken by the Canadians on August 15th. When the Battalion went into the line south-east of Hill 70, on August 30th, with headquarters in "Bugs Alley," Lieut.-Colonel Spring was not with it, for he had taken over temporary command of the Brigade and for a few days Major J. P. Wylie, D.S.O., 2nd Sherwood Foresters, was in command. The next day he went to hospital and Major G. A. Stockdale, M.C., 1st West Yorkshires, succeeded him. Brig.-General Bridgford, C.M.G., D.S.O., upon relinquishing command of the Brigade, wrote to the 11th Essex acknowledging the assistance which he had received at all times, adding: "The Battalion has done extra well and has steadily improved during the last twelve months. I am so glad, too, that its luck has improved with it and that the jobs you have undertaken have not only been well carried out, but have been very successful. I shall always have a soft spot in my heart for the 11th Essex; they are fine men, well led."

The Essex went out of the line to Les Brebis on the night of September 4th-5th, which was rendered unpleasant by a gas shell barrage, resulting in three casualties. The next day the Battalion

left for Vaudricourt, where one of the most pleasant functions was a brigade paper chase, in which all the mounted officers took part, the Essex representatives being well up at the finish.

When at Bracquemont on September 14th Lieut.-Colonel Spring relinquished temporary command of the Brigade and command of the Battalion on being appointed brigadier of the 33rd Brigade, 11th Division. It was the same brigade with which Lieut.-Colonel Spring entered the war in Gallipoli. When departing the old commander thus eloquently paid tribute to the 11th Essex in his diary: "Saw Battalion off to the trenches for the last time and felt very ill and sick at heart to see them go. My time with them has been a splendid 14½ months; no one could have had finer or better officers and men to lead." Brig.-General G. S. G. Craufurd was the new brigadier of the 18th Brigade and when in support at Hill 70, Major C. H. Dumbell, D.S.O., 2nd Sherwood Foresters, took over command of the Essex on September 16th. All ranks were very sad at the departure of Colonel Spring, but immediately took to his successor, for he soon proved himself a leader of men. He quickly obtained their confidence by his cheerful demeanour and the charmed life he seemed to have when in critical situations. "Our new C.O. (Colonel Dumbell)," wrote an officer, "arrived recently. He is a huge man with a bluff military bearing and manner. All soldiers don't look the part, but he certainly does. It will take a good man to follow Colonel Spring, but we shall see. His way of introducing himself to the officers is suggestive of his attitude to things in general and he has a touch of understanding and humour which should be helpful. 'Well, gentlemen, I don't much care what you call me. I don't mind you calling me "The C.O." or even "The Old Man." But please don't label me, "That damned old fool".'"

The Battalion went into the front line, Seaforth Trench, "Bugs Alley," on September 18th. In the early hours of September 21st the enemy were active along the whole divisional front. At the same time that a heavy barrage was put down on the right, raiding parties advanced, but in no case did they succeed in entering trenches. Three parties probed points in the Essex line. About 2.25 a.m. a heavy barrage of mortars and 77m.m. shells came down on the trench. Within a minute or two green lights went up, after which the barrage lifted a hundred yards. Sentries reported that the Germans were moving about, the alarm was given and an effective machine gun fire was opened. One party was seen in front of Helen Trench and dispersed by a Lewis gun, another came forward on the left of a strong post in Noggin Trench and another opposite "D" Company's left flank. Finding that the Battalion was alert the enemy did not press the movement. There were some casualties, which included Captain Joseph Nicholas Douglas Keys, M.C., killed. The next night the Battalion extended its

front to the right by taking over from the 1st Canadians, but by September 23rd the Essex were in reserve, proceeding again to Hill 70 at the close of the month. It was not for long, however, and on October 1st the Battalion moved back again. "A" Company were in Loos Brewery, "B" in Mouse Trench, "C" in Village Line and "D" in Martyr's Alley, with the Battalion headquarters in Les Brebis. They were in the line again on October 5th, but out of it on the 8th, when they proceeded to Mazingarbe, near Vaudricourt, where they practised for a mysterious operation, which subsequently became famous as the Battle of Cambrai. The Battalion moved into Brigade support via Les Brebis on the night of October 17th-18th, but finally went out of the sector on October 22nd, when, curiously enough, the 18th Brigade was relieved by the 33rd Brigade, commanded by the old battalion commander. The Essex went to Nœux-les-Mines on October 23rd and then by rail to Cottres, moving thence by easy stages to the Magnicourt area, where there was intensive training for the coming fight, particularly in tank tactics and attack in co-operation with aeroplanes. By way of Peronne the Battalion reached Dessart Wood on November 17th, where two days were spent in well-screened tents.



BATTLE OF CAMBRAI.

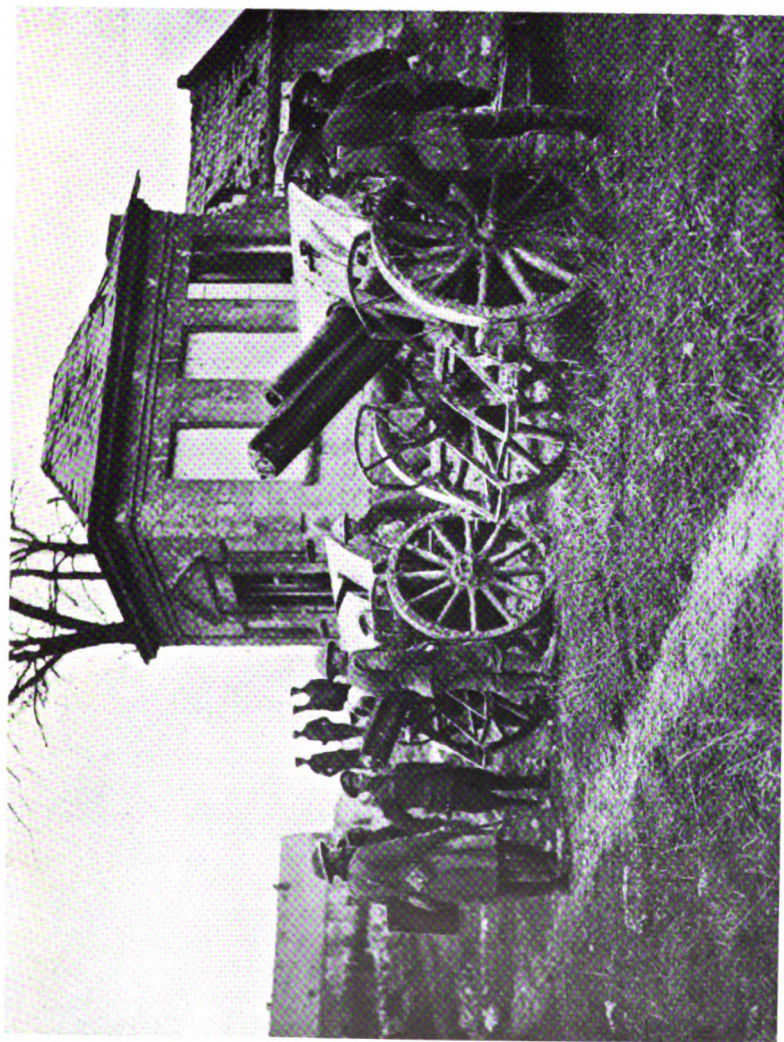
The intention of the British High Command in the series of operations which became known as the Battle of Cambrai was to break the salient in the Hindenburg Line about the Canal du Nord, then to take the high ground which commanded Cambrai and to disorganize the enemy's forces sufficiently to afford cavalry freedom to act and cause the enemy serious anxiety for his communications. "The French held considerable forces in the immediate vicinity to exploit successes. It was reckoned that the enemy could not reinforce his front under forty-eight hours. Everything depended in the first instance on successful surprise, and in the second on securing within forty-eight hours the important tactical points within the salient. The difficulties of surprise, which were many and serious, were most successfully overcome, but the enterprise failed eventually because the key points were not seized. The principal factors operating against success were the limited hours of daylight and the long distances to be traversed both by men and by tanks, which, though vastly improved since 1916, were still very slow. To secure the high ground west of Cambrai, the canal had to be crossed by tanks. Whilst smashing the enemy's salient we, ourselves, were making a salient, extending our front, as far as the Third Army was concerned, from a straight 7,000 yards to a curving 15,000 yards, thus affording the enemy a chance of a blow at the sides and hinges of the salient, of which he availed himself to good purpose ten days after our initial attack." To enable the tanks to cross the trenches of the Hindenburg Line each vehicle carried a huge faggot on its prow, which, when dropped, provided sufficient purchase for the tank to negotiate the opposite side. The III (right) and IV Corps were employed in the initial advance. The former consisted of the 12th, 20th and 6th Divisions and the latter of the 51st and 62nd Divisions. The attack took place on November 20th, prior to which the commander of the 6th Division (Major-General T. O. Marden) issued a spirited order of the day, which ran: "To-morrow a new page in the history of the war will be turned. It will be memorable as the day on which new tactics were introduced and the 6th Division can count itself fortunate in being one of the first divisions to employ them. The divisional commander is confident that the enemy will be completely surprised and defeated and that the 6th Division will add new laurels to those which it has so gallantly won in many a battle during the past three years. He wishes all ranks the best of luck and success in this new venture."

The 6th Division, with the 71st Brigade and 16th Infantry Brigade leading, and having the 20th Division on the right and 51st Division on the left, were to move forward from the Villers Plouich-Beaucamps line, and having taken the first objective, Ribecourt, and the spur to the south-east of it, over a mile and a half away, were then to go forward to the second objective, the support system, a further distance of a thousand yards. Then the 18th Brigade had to go through the 71st Brigade and secure the third objective, Premy Chapel Ridge, which lay a mile ahead. The Brigade had also to make a defensive flank towards Flesquieres, so as to protect the 51st Division on the left and secure the flank of the 29th Division on the right. The latter had to go through the 6th and 20th Divisions and seize the crossings of the St. Quentin Canal at Marcoing and Masnieres and the high ground at Rumilly. Detailed instructions were issued in respect of each movement. For instance, notes were circulated upon Ribecourt. The outskirts were thought to be easily defensible, but the village itself was deemed of little military value. The natural features, however, offered considerable resources to a stubborn enemy. The village and outskirts were crossed by two ravines. "They are more or less sharp edged furrows, of small depth and breadth, generally edged with trees, and almost always dry, except after heavy rainstorms and when large quantities of snow are thawing." The hedges consisted of elm, elder and thorn, whilst the walls of the buildings, which were of freestone, were often of great thickness. Under the village square was a gallery in bad condition, the entrance to which, at the church belfry, had been filled in. The steeple of the church was loopholed and was a strongly defensible position, for 90ft. above the ground was a concrete platform, with a floor 80ft. square, surrounded by a 3ft. parapet.

"Opposite the Division the Hindenburg Line commenced with an outpost line 750 yards distant on the left and 250 yards on the right. This was out of sight of our front trenches by reason of the curve of the ground. Half a mile behind this came the main system, consisting of two trenches 200 yards apart, the whole guarded by most formidable belts of wire about 150 yards in depth. The interval between outpost and main systems was sown with well sited and concealed machine gun positions. A mile farther on, and on the opposite side of the valley for the most part, ran the support system, similar to the main system. One and a half miles farther back again was the reserve system, of which only machine gun dug-outs were completed and a small amount of wire had been erected." Two tank battalions, each with 36 tanks, were allotted to the Division, "B" going ahead of the 16th Brigade and "H" of the 71st Brigade. If they efficiently performed their task there was every expectation that the infantry would have little difficulty in securing their objectives, unless Couillet Wood and Ribecourt village were

obstinately defended. The subsequent course of events justified optimism, for the advance went with magnificent precision. Couillet Wood was seized by the Buffs and Ribecourt by the 9th Norfolks, the 11th Essex subsequently clearing the latter to facilitate the advance of the 18th Brigade whilst the 71st Brigade were taking the support system. The 18th Brigade was also at Premy Chapel Ridge well up to time, easing the pressure on the 51st Division, which had been delayed near Flesquieres by their tanks being successfully shelled as they came over the ridge. The West Yorkshires and 2nd D.L.I. captured a battery with a bayonet charge. The cavalry were held up by snipers at Ribecourt and it was near nightfall ere their patrols reached Nine Wood. The 9th Suffolks, although unaided by artillery and tanks, were able to secure the bridge at Marcoing. The whole of the objectives were seized at relatively small loss, the casualties only numbering 650. Nearly 1,300 prisoners were taken, with 23 guns and between 40 and 50 machine guns and trench mortars, the corps commander being delighted with the success. Flesquieres was taken next morning by the 51st Division, and the 14th D.L.I., with a squadron of the Queen's Bays, entered Cantaing, which was subsequently handed over to the 4th Gordons. The Buffs cleared Noyelles. By the night of November 26th-27th the 18th Brigade was holding the section of the line up to the south-eastern edge of Cantaing, for the 6th Division was responsible for the section between Cantaing and Noyelles. The 29th Division was beyond the Canal, but making little progress, and enemy opposition was stiffening against the Guards Division at Fontaine.

The reaction came on November 30th and very violent it proved to be. The Germans struck on all sides, but particularly at the bases of the British salient. At 9 a.m. the alarming news came to the 6th Division that the enemy were near Gouzeaucourt, behind the old British line, where, luckily, they were checked by the transport personnel of the 18th Brigade, who held a portion of the village until the Guards cleared the village later in the day. In this fighting Quartermaster J. P. L. Shea, 2nd D.L.I., and Captain and Adjutant W. Paul, 1st West Yorks, were mortally wounded. The 16th Brigade was sent to the ridge between Beaucamps and Gouzeaucourt, the brigadier narrowly escaping capture as he endeavoured to report to the G.O.C. 29th Division at Gouzeaucourt. The Brigade was ordered to retake the latter village, but found the Guards already there, and it accordingly moved to the left, with a view to retaking Cemetery Ridge, lying between Gonnellieu and La Vacquerie. The attack, early in the morning of December 1st, in co-operation with the 20th Division, failed, but it paved the way for a brigade of the Guards to take it next morning, assisted by artillery and tanks. Meanwhile, the 18th Brigade had beaten off an enemy movement at Cantaing. The 14th



Imperial War Museum Photograph.

BATTLE OF CAMBRAI.

Guns captured when the 11th Essex cleared Ribecourt, 22nd November, 1917.

D.L.I., of the 18th Brigade, were lent to the 16th Brigade, which relieved the 87th Brigade (29th Division) astride the canal at Marcoing. The enemy heavily attacked this Brigade on 3rd December and forced units across the canal. Successful efforts were made to regain the bridgehead, but it was decided to withdraw to the Hindenburg support line and by December 10th the infantry of the Division had been transferred for rest south-west of Arras, the artillery following later.

PIERCING THE HINDENBURG LINE.

In connection with these operations, the Battalion proceeded at 6 p.m. on November 19th to assembly positions near Beaucamp and was disposed as follows: "A" and "B" Companies, Beaucamp Reserve Trench; "C" Company, Beaucamp Switch; "D" Company, Broken Trench. The strength was 21 officers and 440 other ranks. Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Dumbell, D.S.O., was in command and the company commanders were: "A," Captain H. J. Beard, M.C.; "B," Captain A. K. Fison, M.C.; "C," Captain S. E. Silver, M.C., and "D," Lieut. J. C. P. Calastreme. Later the same evening it was intimated that zero hour would be 6.20 a.m. on the following day. The capture of the first objective was undertaken by the 16th (right) and 71st Brigades, divided into two phases. The 71st Brigade, to which the 11th Essex were attached, moved in three waves. The first wave (1st Leicesters and 9th Suffolks) were to capture the Hindenburg front line and the immediate support line; the second wave (9th Norfolks and half battalion 2nd Sherwood Foresters) were responsible for the taking of Ribecourt and the trench running from the bridge over the canal; the third wave (11th Essex and remainder of the 2nd Sherwood Foresters) were to seize the Hindenburg support system. The 18th Brigade then went through to take the third objective, Premy Chapel Ridge, using for this purpose the 1st West Yorkshires and the 2nd D.L.I., the 14th D.L.I. afterwards pushing forward a company to seize the bridgehead at Marcoing and another company to form a defensive flank along the track running from Premy Chapel to Marcoing. The other two companies were to be held in support to meet any counter attack which might develop from the neighbourhood of Marcoing or Nine Wood. When the 29th Division had passed through to seize Masnières, the 14th D.L.I. were to become brigade support in the Hindenburg support line, and the 11th Essex, coming again under orders of the 18th Brigade, would be withdrawn into the brigade reserve in the vicinity of Ribecourt. Twelve tanks accompanied each wave.

The barrage opened at 6.20 a.m. and at 6.45 a.m. "D" Company advanced to get into line with "C" Company. Five minutes later the whole Battalion went forward in artillery formation behind the tanks of the 23rd Tank Company. The enemy fire

was slight and very wild. Plush Trench, the German outpost line, was crossed at 7.37 and the main Hindenburg Line at 8.3 a.m. The advance was continued at half-past eight and twenty minutes later Manse Trench was reached, where the Essex were informed that the 9th Norfolks were through Ribecourt. The Battalion was also through the village by 9.45 a.m. and headquarters were established near the railway station. At 9.50 a.m. the Essex deployed into tank formation and attacked the Hindenburg Support Line behind Ribecourt. This system was carried without difficulty. The prisoners taken comprised ten officers and 200 other ranks, together with two heavy and two light machine guns. A battery of 4.2's immediately behind the Hindenburg support line was silenced by rifle and Lewis gun fire. The 18th Brigade then went through and seized the third objective, establishing themselves on the Premy Chapel Ridge. The casualties were comparatively slight. Captain Sidney Edwin Silver, M.C., and five other ranks were killed, an officer and 42 others were wounded, whilst four were missing. "In the grey dawn," wrote Corporal G. W. Chase, "we advanced, under cover of tanks, upon a practically deserted line. There was hardly any opposition, yet as each tank hove into view over the crest of the rise, a well directed shell from a wood, fired at almost point blank range, disabled it. I believe that out of about fifteen tanks thirteen were disabled. It transpired that a German officer and gunner had courageously stuck to their post and had done the damage."

"Tanks and troops moving off in the darkness," wrote Major H. S. Roberts, "appeared like so many monsters of the dawn of history, guided by illuminated posts and white tapes. We at transport lines became very anxious as the attack developed. Encouraging reports, however, came in, much to the satisfaction of the Indian Cavalry, saddled up and waiting for the order to gallop into Cambrai. About 2 p.m. our spirits were raised by seeing Lieut. Rooke leading about 200 prisoners, including a 6ft. 3in. colonel. I went to Ribecourt that night and I found all happy, battalion headquarters being in a cement dug-out below the cellar of a large farmhouse. There I saw the 4.2 howitzer guns, two of which now stand at the entrance to Warley Barracks, suitably inscribed. The next day or so Captain Freeman, the M.O., took me round different parts of the line. Many tanks were out of action and we stood on one and watched the fighting in and near Bourlon Wood. One of these damaged tanks I saw afterwards in Trafalgar Square, being used as an office for the sale of War Saving Certificates."

TRANSPORT HELPS TO HOLD THE LINE AT GOUZEAUCOURT.

On November 21st the Battalion went into billets at Ribecourt, which was a pleasant change after the ruined villages of the



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Air photograph of area North-East of Ribecourt, showing part of the Hindenburg Support Line, 1917.

Ypres Salient and of the Somme. It had been badly shelled, but not shattered. The Germans had constructed deep dug-outs and concreted tunnels, into which they were accustomed to retire during bombardment and in their hurried departure they had left many of their belongings. The Essex were back again on the Premy Chapel Ridge on November 24th. After three days there it was transferred to Brigade reserve in the Hindenburg support line. From this position working parties were found for the new line at Cantaing. There, on November 30th, the Essex stood-to during the enemy counter-thrust and subsequently formed a defensive flank along the railway from Ribecourt to Marcoing, but the tide of enemy reaction did not reach the Battalion that day. Nevertheless, the transport personnel had an exciting time in Gouzeaucourt under Major H. S. Roberts, the Quartermaster. About 8.15 a.m. on the fateful day many men of the R.E., R.F.A. and Labour Battalions came through the transport lines and stated that the enemy had broken through the main line and that the troops were retiring. Amidst heavy shelling, all portable stores were placed on the vehicles of the first line transport and moved off in good order about 9.5 a.m., under Lieut. C. F. H. Fetherstonhaugh, with the R.Q.M.S. and C.Q.M.S. All other ranks, numbering 44 rifles, were divided into three sections, each under an N.C.O., supported by two Lewis guns, and took up position on a line approximately north-west of Gouzeaucourt. At 10.40 a.m. it was reported the enemy were advancing east of the village and as there were no signs of a hostile advance on the north, the party were moved to the eastern side, where the Germans were encountered and stopped, six prisoners being captured. The Germans then tried to move forward on the right, where the details of the 1st West Yorkshires and 2nd D.L.I. had taken up position. The situation became so threatening that a Lewis gun and several men were sent to assist Captain and Quartermaster Shea, 2nd D.L.I., who continued successfully to resist the Germans until the arrival of the 1st Irish Guards at about 1 p.m. Then the details of the Essex moved back to Gouzeaucourt. The officer commanding the Irish Guards asked for protection for his flanks and this was promptly given. Lieut. Robinson took the details of the Yorkshires and Durhams to the right flank and Major Roberts those of the Essex to the left flank, where they held on until further reinforcements came in. The Essex were relieved early on the morning of December 1st and went back to Dessart Wood, Major Roberts and his men having performed gallant and efficient service at a critical time. Colonel Pollock, of the Irish Guards, testified to the very good fight which had been put up and to the fact that later on they protected the flank of his battalion. Major Roberts later specially mentioned C.Q.M.S. Lewis, D.C.M., Lance-Sergeant Freeman and Lance-Corporals Lovett and Meade for their work, also the Drummers.

The Battalion soon came up against the enemy hosts, for on December 1st the 2nd D.L.I. were relieved round Cantaing, two companies in the front line and two in support. After three days' hard work, the Essex withdrew on December 4th to the Hindenburg support so quietly that the enemy were unaware of the movement. Thence, on December 6th, a large patrol of "D" Company reconnoitred the front and brought in two prisoners of the 68th R.I.R., who had been caught in the wire. They were youths who had only recently arrived from Stanislaus. 2nd Lieut. H. Cleal and a sergeant pluckily attacked an enemy outpost on December 7th, wounding several men and capturing a light machine gun. This gallant officer was, unfortunately, killed three days later, so that he was not aware of the award of the M.C. "C" Company took the place of a company of the 2/5th Sherwood Foresters on the left front and "A" Company were moved up in their place. Upon relief by the 10th Worcesters the Essex went to Hindenburg Line on December 10th, and next day proceeded via Trescault to tents at Etricourt. Thus closed 23 days of continuous service in the battle line and "the appearance of the Battalion," wrote an observer, "was more that of Weary Willie and Tired Tim, yet the 11th Essex spirit remained unquenched beneath the trench grime."

The Battalion went on to Blaireville and then on December 16th into trenches at Bullecourt. After a short spell, the Essex were back at Blaireville and spent Christmas Day there. On December 27th they marched to Pommier, where they were quartered when 1918 dawned. Major D. C. Hasler, M.C., was in temporary command. On January 10th the Battalion marched to Buchanan Camp, Achiet-le-Petit, and then, a week later, to Courcelles. Two days afterwards the 11th Essex moved to Lindop Camp, Fremicourt. The next day they went into the trenches in front of Nine Elms, when Colonel Dumbell resumed command. After an eight days' tour they entered rest billets in Beugny and part of their occupation there was working in Rabbit and Rat Alleys.

"Enemy aeroplanes," wrote an Essex officer, "were very active and when we took over from the Highland Division they warned us that owing to aerial bombing there were more casualties in rest camps than in the front line. The camps were close to the main road and mainly composed of Nissen huts, which, being of corrugated iron, afforded little protection against bombs. The enemy 'planes came particularly on moonlit nights, when they could be guided by the straight Cambrai-Bapaume road. You could hear them coming—'Der-er, der-er, der-er'—then when it seemed they were right overhead there would be silence, as they shut off engines in readiness to drop their 'eggs.' This they would do—and then make off home for a fresh lot, doing this, perhaps, three times a night. The Battalion from which we took over had had a bad time, but we were more fortunate,

excepting one or, perhaps, two bombs which dropped in our transport lines. Trenches had been dug to which one could go, but this was not a pleasant proceeding on a winter's night, so I preferred to stay in my bunk pondering on the fraction of time it would take a heavy bomb to get through the thin iron roof and fall plomp on my 'tummy'—and what could happen then? Well, I'd have no interest in it, anyhow. I forget who was sharing the hut with me, but I know he would persist in getting up and looking into the sky and telling me what was happening, which I thought was a waste of time. There were not many nights when one could sleep in pyjamas and, having once got cosy, it seemed a pity to disturb oneself."

When the Battalion went into the line again there was an encounter with the enemy, which resulted in serious loss. Beyond the trench there was a listening post, which was occupied by three men from dusk until daylight. Colonel Dumbell, Captain Howard Kilbourne Harris, M.C., commanding "D" Company, and others went out on patrol on the night of February 21st-22nd and early next morning, in order to confirm their observations, Major Hasler went out again, with Captain Harris and a sergeant. They ran up against the enemy and suffered heavily, Captain Harris being killed and Major Hasler and the sergeant being wounded. The Essex were in support at the close of the month and in the early part of March were in and out of the line. The whole energies of the units were directed towards preparing the sector for defence, for a German attack was reported to be brewing on March 10th, but it did not materialize. Fire bays were improved, parapets thickened and some thousands of yards of double apron wire were put out. An inter-company relief was projected on March 11th, but the German offensive remained much in mind. The Battalion supplied working and carrying parties for the laying of two minefields in No Man's Land as a defence against tanks. These areas were prepared by burying 200 2in. trench mortar bombs fuse upwards, the fuse being specially timed so as to explode when a heavy object passed over it. This work was completed in time for an attack which was expected on the morning of March 13th, but again it was not delivered. Precautions were not relaxed, but the patrolling was not so arduous. The Battalion was relieved on the night of March 19th-20th. The next day the storm broke.

DISBANDMENT OF BATTALIONS.

The Division, during February, had been reconstituted owing to the reduction of the brigades to a three battalion basis. In this case the change was accomplished with the minimum of trouble, for one battalion in each brigade was disbanded. Thus the 9th Suffolks, 8th Bedfords and 14th D.L.I. passed out of existence, the last-named to the great regret of their comrades of the 18th Brigade. The three Brigade machine gun companies

and the Divisional Machine Gun Company became the 6th Machine Gun Battalion. The Divisional front in March was on a forward slope opposite the villages of Queant and Pronville. "No Man's Land averaged three-quarters of a mile in width. The whole area was downland and very suitable for the action of tanks. The position lay astride a succession of well-defined broad spurs and narrow valleys (like the fingers of a partially opened hand) merging into the broad transverse valley which separated the British line from the two villages above-mentioned. All the advantages of ground lay with the defence and it seemed as if no attack could succeed, unless by the aid of tanks. A large portion of the front line—notably the valleys—was sown with 2in. mortar bombs with instantaneous fuses, which would detonate under the pressure of a wagon, but not of a man's foot. In addition, five anti-tank 18-pounder guns were placed in positions of vantage. The wire was very broad and thick. The position would, indeed, have been almost impregnable had there been sufficient time to complete it, and had there been separate troops for counter-attack. The ground was a portion of that wrested from the enemy in the Cambrai offensive of November-December, 1917, but had only improvised trenches. A month's hard frost in January had militated against digging and though there was a complete front trench, with reserve trench, the support trenches hardly existed and dug-outs were noticeable by their absence. The front was 4,100 yards in extent, the three brigades in line—18th on right, 71st in centre and 16th on left—having approximately equal frontages. The depth from front or outpost zone to reserve or battle zone was about 2,000 yards. With only three battalions in a brigade there was no option but to assign one battalion in each brigade to the defence of the outpost zones, and keep two battalions in depth in the battle zone. With battalions at just over half strength, and with the undulating nature of the ground, the defence resolved itself everywhere into holding a succession of posts with a very limited field of fire. A good corps line, called the Vaulx-Morchies Line, had been dug, the nearest portion a mile behind the reserve line, and this was held by the Pioneers and R.E. owing to scarcity of numbers." There were obvious signs of an imminent enemy offensive, including the digging of ammunition pits for seventy extra batteries. Therefore, when the bombardment opened at 5 a.m. on March 21st it was not unexpected, but it proved to be of much greater weight than anticipated. Under cover of the thick mist, the Germans, making skilful use of the cover afforded by the Noreuil Valley, on the left, Lagnicourt Valley, in the centre, and Morchies Valley, on the right, were soon in possession of the forward system. The only attack which was for the time being beaten off was that against the 71st Brigade. Success elsewhere, however, forced the Division back, struggling hard. The Germans entered Noreuil and Lagnicourt, and gradually drove back the 16th

Brigade towards the corps line, where the further advance was temporarily stayed. The 71st Brigade stopped enemy egress from Lagnicourt. The position seemed well nigh desperate when Skipton Reserve Strong Point was entered, but the Norfolks and Leicesters wrested it from the enemy again. The Germans very nearly got between the 71st and 18th Brigades, but the 2nd D.L.I. stopped them. Later on the security of the Division was gravely menaced by a hostile advance up Morchies Valley and the capture of trenches of the 51st Division on the right. The 2nd West Yorks, with aid from the 11th Essex, beat off three attacks from the divisional reserve line. The heaviest losses of the 18th Brigade were sustained when withdrawing during the evening. The 18th and 71st Brigades had maintained their hold on Lagnicourt, the Morchies Valley and vicinity all day, though the enemy had penetrated far in rear on both flanks. That night the Division was on the corps line, each brigade having been reinforced by a battalion of the 75th Brigade of the 25th Division. All day long on March 22nd the enemy maintained the pressure and the Division was gradually forced back upon some hastily improvised defences over half a mile in rear. The struggle was maintained with great obstinacy. In one case a sunken road, in which were the headquarters of the of the 10th and 71st Brigades, was taken and retaken three times. The divisional commander specially mentioned, among others, Lieut.-Colonel Dumbell, of the 11th Essex, for the defence of this sector. The losses were enormous, however, so much so that by night the 18th Brigade had only one hundred of all ranks left. The right flank was handed over to the 75th Brigade. The offensive continued and the 16th and 71st Brigades had to fall back to the new army line and there, at night, the infantry handed over to the 41st Division, proceeding afterwards to Achiet. The artillery, however, were retained and were not relieved until March 29th. They had the hearty thanks of the army commander (Sir J. Byng) for their devotion and courage, whereby they had broken up overwhelming attacks. The infantry casualties totalled 3,900. The Division was almost destroyed, for the personnel of the three brigades was less than 500. The battalions at the beginning of the fight were practically all at half-strength. The 18th Brigade had only eight officers and 110 other ranks surviving and the 71st Brigade 11 officers and 279 other ranks. The losses of artillery, machine-gunners and other services were also very heavy.

FACING THE GREAT GERMAN OFFENSIVE.

Preliminary to these happenings the 11th Essex arrived at Beugnatre early on the morning of March 20th and had baths later at Bapaume and Favreuil. At 5 p.m. practically the whole Battalion, except "A" Company and two platoons of "B" Company, left at Morchies, paraded for a working party,

under Major Stockdale, the second-in-command. With a strength of 300, it was taken by light railway from Favreuil to Maricourt Wood to dig a trench, called Lagnicourt Switch, for the 71st Brigade. The two forward platoons of "B" Company were also employed on this work. At 2 a.m. on March 21st an order came putting in force the precautions which had been detailed for the expected attack on March 18th, the role of the 11th Essex, less one company, as the reserve battalion of the brigade, being to take up an assembly position. Unfortunately, the train detailed to bring the working party back broke down. The men had to march and they arrived in an exhausted condition from 3 a.m. onwards. They were served with tea and rum and by 4.15 a.m. "C" Company was proceeding to the assembly position. Half an hour later the greater part of the Battalion had left camp, the exception being details of the working party who had not yet returned. Just after 5 a.m., as the commanding officer was moving off in rear of the Battalion, a heavy shell fell nearby. The hostile bombardment had begun. Amidst an increasing tornado of sound the Essex moved along the roads via Vaulx, whilst Echelon "A" of the transport went by cross-country tracks. Gas shells rained down, especially on Maricourt Wood and Morchies Valley, so that box respirators had to be adjusted. One shell which fell near a man who had neglected to take this precaution so affected him that he died in a few minutes. The assembly position in the sunken road was the subject of special attention with 5.9's as the Battalion headquarters began to arrive about 6.30 a.m., followed at intervals by "D," "C" and "B" Companies. The M.O. (Captain F. P. Freeman, M.C.) was wounded slightly in five places, but declined to leave and remained throughout the subsequent battle, although in considerable discomfort. The arrival of the transport was signaled by a shellburst, which destroyed a S.A.A. limber. The limbers were hastily unloaded and then sent back to the transport lines. "Reserve huts, canteens, field hospitals, waterworks and store places all received their share of the enemy gunfire," wrote Major Roberts. "Streams of wounded officers and men able to walk were coming towards Bapaume. Ambulance wagons were going up and down, shells shrieking and aircraft trying to add to the uproar by bombing. It was a picture no artist could portray." At about 11 a.m. Lieut.-Colonel Dumbell was ordered to take charge of the troops in the brigade sector, Beaumetz-Morchies, or corps line, "C" Company (Captain W. F. Martinson) and "D" Company (Captain J. S. Marks), under Major G. N. Stockdale, were sent to reinforce the 1st West Yorkshires on the right sub-sector, whilst half of "B" Company and Battalion headquarters went to the corps line, where "A" Company and the other half of "B" Company were already in position, with the 12th Field Company, R.E., infantry details and one company, 11th Leicesters (Pioneers). By this time the



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Air photograph showing Beaumetz-les-Cambrai and the Batnaume-Cambrai road. In the top left corner of the print is the South-Eastern area of Morchies, 1918.

hostile barrage had ceased, so that the movement was effected without casualty. Half an hour after noon Lieut. E. P. Roberts, commanding "A" Company, was ordered to reinforce the 2nd D.L.I. and Colonel Dumbell reorganized the troops in the brigade sector of the corps line. "B" Company (87 other ranks) was on the right in touch with the Gordon Highlanders, then the 12th Company, R.E., and infantry details, 120 other ranks, and after that a company of the 11th Leicesters, 60 other ranks. Battalion headquarters were transferred to the headquarters of the 18th L.T.M.B. The position in front was extremely critical and causing great anxiety. By 1.45 p.m. the enemy had penetrated part of West Yorkshire front, on the reserve line, but not to any considerable extent. As the afternoon wore on, however, the position rapidly worsened. Machine gun bullets began to whistle down the road in which Battalion headquarters were situated, showing that the enemy had penetrated deeply on the left flank. A message was also received stating that the troops were retiring along the Lagnicourt Spur.

Lieut. Roberts, of "A" Company, who was to fall ere the day had passed, with most of his gallant men, late in the afternoon sent the following cheery message: "Half my company are at the disposal of the C.O. 2nd D.L.I. The other half are forming a defensive flank facing North, also aided by the stragglers of 'C' Company, under C.S.M. Grant. We suffered several casualties getting here and the situation is far from *bonne*. West Yorks have fallen back and the C.O. of the 2nd D.L.I. expects to withdraw at dusk. I have got to act as covering party for them. Otherwise all O.K. P.S.—'A' Company has had great sport at sniping the Boche."

At dusk the remains of the West Yorkshires, the 2nd D.L.I. and three companies of the 11th Essex withdrew to the corps line and it was during this movement that the Essex sustained heavy casualties, Major Stockdale and other officers of the Battalion never being seen again. The night passed fairly quietly. R.S.M. Larkman took out a patrol to obtain information on the left flank, whilst the 7th Gordons dealt with a pocket of the enemy reported to be in the corps line on the right flank. Close upon midnight Colonel Dumbell again reorganized his force. The 11th Essex had 210 on the right, then 98 of the West Yorkshires and 128 of the 2nd D.L.I. The 158rd Brigade was on the right, with the Worcesters on the left. All ranks were very exhausted and there was much anxiety lest the enemy should attack in force. At 6.30 a.m. the 11th Cheshires were brought up in support of the 18th Brigade. Battalion headquarters were removed from the old L.T.M.B. headquarters to a point nearby, where a cable was buried. The outlying companies were in the vicinity of Chauffours Wood and Morchies.

The early morning was again misty and advantage was taken of this by the enemy to place machine gun and trench mortars a short distance from the wire. Their movements were observed

and from 7.30 a.m. until 11 a.m. a number were shot down. No communication had been established with the artillery, so that its fire could not be directed, but apart from this disadvantage the situation remained much the same until 4.30 p.m., when report came that the enemy had broken through the corps line to the north of Morchies and was moving south-west, rendering the position of the 18th Brigade most critical. By 6.30 p.m. it had become untenable, for the enemy penetrated the right flank and the Brigade was isolated, though for a time the stout resistance of two platoons of the Royal Scots afforded material aid. At midnight Brigade headquarters ordered withdrawal without waiting for relief. 'Buses were promised at the Monument, Favreuil-Sapignies road, but shells were falling around this point and no 'buses were available, so that the exhausted units of the Brigade staggered along the road to Buchanan Camp. All ranks fell asleep at each ten minutes' halt, but there was no straggling, and at 6.30 a.m. on March 23rd seven officers and 77 other ranks marched steadily into camp. At 10 a.m. all men of the Battalion who were not in the fight were ordered to stand to, and during the morning Captain Alexander and 80 other ranks dug a defensive line upon a ridge north-east of Achiet-le-Grand. The Germans had broken through at Mory and this work was done to arrest any further advance. The situation became easier during the day and the party was withdrawn on the early morning of March 24th. "Thus ended," says the War Diary, "the Battalion's part in the battle."

The losses were very heavy. Ten officers were killed—Major Guy Nelson Stockdale, M.C., second-in-command, Captain J. S. Marks, Captain S. Simpson, Lieut. Edmund Percy Roberts, 2nd Lieuts. Andrew Douglas Moore, Francis Henry Bradbeer, Frederick Alfred Ellis, Thomas Wilfred Pinder, H. V. Cook and R. V. Bullen, and six wounded. Thirty-one other ranks were killed, 44 other ranks wounded and missing, 281 other ranks missing and 105 other ranks wounded—a total of 16 officers and 411 other ranks.

"Two main observations," wrote Colonel Dumbell, "seem to emerge from the experiences gained in the operation. Firstly, the complete protection given by the small box respirator and the importance of practice in its use. Secondly, the urgent and paramount need of more thorough and vigorous instruction and practice in musketry. Throughout the action the lack of fire orders and fire control was most marked, and covering fire was not employed in the way in which it should have been. In addition, the failure of all communication with the artillery, even from Brigade headquarters, seems to indicate that much more attention should be paid to this matter in future. It is considered that the rifle bays in the corps line were much too long (45ft.) and casualties were sustained which would not have occurred had traverses been more frequent."

The events in the corps line were described by Lieut. F. S. Pinney. In the afternoon of the second day, he said, he was acting as liaison officer with the Brigade and was with Lieut. Willett, Acting Signalling Officer, in a dug-out at Battalion headquarters in a sunken road. "It was about five o'clock when the look-out shouted, 'They are in the corps line.' We were soon out of the dug-out and, grabbing our rifles, lined the bank with the remainder of Battalion headquarters personnel. We did not have a particularly good view to our immediate front, as there was a ridge about 150 yards ahead of us, but, looking half right, we could see, on the higher ground, the enemy forming up in succession of lines and being marshalled by an officer on a white horse. They came on in waves and there was much hand-to-hand fighting on our right flank, which was held by some Jocks of the 51st Division. Then came a fleet of aeroplanes—27 of them—flying low and firing machine guns. Presently we saw Lieut. Place appear over the ridge in front, and by shouting and waving our arms we attracted his attention, and he came in to us. Very few of our men managed to get back. Colonel Dumbell had placed Willett and myself each in charge of one half of the troops, and he presently gave the order to withdraw to a ridge beyond some low ground that lay behind us. We went, one half at a time, after giving the enemy a burst of covering fire. The withdrawal was carried out in very good order, and although the enemy 'planes were flying low and firing their machine guns, no one appeared to have been hit. Upon gaining the ridge, we occupied some small excavations that had been previously prepared. It was then getting dark, so we just settled down to wait for it. Our view was rather obstructed by a camouflage screen in front, so Colonel Dumbell and a small party of men very gallantly went forward to fell the screen, which was successfully accomplished. The enemy had come up to within a few yards and were consolidating their position. One of the enemy *would* sing, so we had to shoot him; at least after listening carefully and firing one shot into the night the singing stopped abruptly. Well, there we were in little ready made 'graves' waiting for dawn and the scuppering that must follow. The Colonel had gone to Brigade headquarters and when he returned and gave the order 'Hand all your ammunition to the machine gunners and proceed to Achiet-le-Grand,' it was rather difficult to believe that one was not dreaming. The ammunition was duly and quietly handed over, not without regret and a little prayer for the machine gunners, and the remnants of the Battalion—fewer than 80, all ranks—filtered on to the Cambrai Road *en route* for Achiet-le-Grand. What a walk it was; one could not call it a march. The men were absolutely knocked, and when on the way a halt was called, it was difficult to get them up again, as in the few minutes that we were halted, most of the men had fallen asleep. We went

along, however, at a fair pace. Lieut. Place was fast asleep and was walking, or staggering, on the arm of Captain Freeman (M.O.), who, himself, had some shrapnel in his leg and a nasty graze on the side of his head, but had carried on, doing his usual excellent work in the line. The Colonel had gone on by car and sent back a field kitchen with hot soup to meet the party. The hot food worked wonders, and after it the trek proceeded much better. Achiet was reached before dawn and we got sleep in some Nissen huts. The following morning was fine and bright—which was fortunate—and the men soon got about again and were not long in finding out that at the large C.C.S. which had been evacuated there were good supplies of clothing, and most of them seized the opportunity of exchanging their shirts and socks and other garments for new ones. So it was a cleaner and more comfortable party that, in the afternoon, marched to the railhead."

The simply-told adventures of one of the rank and file of the 11th Essex (Pte. Joseph Baldry) recall his first experience in action: "About 4 p.m. on March 20th we were being paid our usual wages whilst we were out of the trenches, when the order came through that every man available had to go on duty with a working party to dig trenches. We continued this task until midnight and went back to the light railway head to be taken back part of the way to our huts at Beugny. We were, however, unable to ride, as the Germans had commenced their attack and the rail was being used to carry up ammunition to the front line of defence, so we had to tramp our way back to our billets. When we reached the huts there was not much left of them, owing to the enemy shellfire. We then proceeded to the Morchies sunken road, where we had many casualties, including our field kitchen, but we were all very thankful to say that our cook ('Dusky' Miller) was not a casualty. He was one of the best, always looking after the men. We stayed in the Morchies sunken road until about midday, I believe, and then the Colonel told us that the Germans were advancing rapidly; they had taken the front line support and were in the reserve line of trenches. Over the top with the best of luck we had to go, to aid the troops in front. It was hell upon earth, I can tell you, and I was thinking all the while of my wife and children, wondering if ever I should see them again. We reached the reserve line and found a few German dead there. We ("D" Company) remained there with some survivors of the D.L.I. and West Yorks until about half-past four in the afternoon, when we were surrounded by the enemy and we had to retire to a safer quarter. We retired then to a sap known as Battalion headquarters in the trenches, and what was left of us, including a major and colonel of the West Yorks and D.L.I., were only 25 all ranks. The Colonel looked at his watch and said, 'Men, stay until dusk sets in and then every man for himself. Don't give yourselves

up.' At about six o'clock he said, 'It is no use. Go and don't give yourselves up. A dead man is better than a prisoner,' and off we went. I remember going to the left of the sap into a road which led to a travel trench and across a sunken road. We rushed through the enemy, as we were surrounded by them in the shape of a pair of scissors. Across the flat we went for our lives, until we reached what was termed a reserve trench, which had been dug during these operations. I was ordered to assist some wounded to the aid post, and I am very thankful to say that although my knowledge of war was very little until this day, I always made a point when leaving our billets to go into the trenches to look for a certain landmark whereby if I was ever in a tight corner I could fall back upon it so as to take me on the right road. By this I knew exactly where the aid post lay and divisional headquarters. When I reached the aid post it was deserted. So on I tramped to divisional headquarters and, while going across a sunken road, saw Colonel Dumbell plodding along upright as a soldier. He was asking where the enemy was. I directed him and proceeded with the wounded. When I reached the top of the dug-out of the divisional headquarters I was met by an officer, who wanted to know who I was and proceeded to question me by asking for my pay book, name, number, who was my captain and colonel, and then he handed over the wounded to the stretcher-bearers and told me I had better stay there, as they would want an extra guard. After doing guard I went down in the dug-out and had a sleep. While sleeping, the corporal of the guard, a man in the West Yorks, was calling me, but being very tired, I slept on. When I awoke in the early hours of the 22nd I found, to my astonishment, that a new division had relieved us. Off I went to the top of the dug-out and there I met one of our gunners and asked him where our division had gone to. He told me that they had gone back towards Achiet-le-Grand. So off I went in search of them and after turning here and then there and making enquiries, I found them and the corporal. When he met me he said, 'Thank God, you are safe. I was calling you last night, and, getting no reply, I thought you were missing.' The next time I met this corporal was at St. Omer, when we were on a divisional competition, in June, 1918. He was then sergeant. We remained there for two days, and on the night of the 23rd or 24th the remainder of the rank and file, under Colonel Dumbell, returned to us, and off we all went to Achiet-le-Grand. We remained there for three days, I believe, and all who were left were paraded under Colonel Dumbell. We formed up in a square and the Colonel addressed the men and thanked them for their behaviour and said how sorry he was for the rank and file who were not present. Tears came into his eyes; he was quite heartbroken. At this time the Brigadier stepped into our midst and tried to persuade the Colonel to go and rest himself. But the Colonel remained

until the Brigadier finished the speech for him. I might mention that our Colonel was a very brave man for the way in which he rallied the men who were left on the night of the 21st and fought side by side with them until he was forced to retire by the command of headquarters."

The thanks of Brigadier-General S. G. Craufurd were conveyed in an order of the day, dated March 27th, which stated: The battle which opened on the 21st March is intended by the enemy to be the opening phase of the final struggle for supremacy between the British and German nations and their divergent national ideals. The courage and devotion to duty displayed by the Brigade has never been surpassed in our national history and will add fresh laurels to the regiments concerned. Our comrades who have fallen have died fighting in one of the decisive battles of the world. Out of 1,600 men of all ranks who went into action on the morning of the 21st, 80 men came out on the morning of the 23rd, retaining their discipline to the last. In the interval the reserve line had maintained its front intact till dusk on the evening of the 21st, though the right flank was turned by noon and the left by 3 p.m. on that day. On the 22nd the remnants of the Brigade still held the Corps line intact till 8 p.m., when fresh troops on the left gave way, and the flank of the Brigade was driven in and overwhelmed. It is not too much to say that the fine stand of the Brigade was not only of extreme importance to the IV Corps, but it has also had decisive results on the whole of the Third Army battle front.

BACK TO THE YPRES SALIENT.

The 6th Division went back to the Ypres Salient with a view to resting and reorganization, only to meet once again the full tide of the German offensive. The 16th and 18th Brigades, part of the XXII Corps, were guarding the front from Broodseinde to Polygon Wood, when, on April 18th, the enemy broke through from Zandvoorde southwards, and the 71st Brigade was sent to reinforce the 49th Division about Neuve Eglise. There the battalions rendered very timely service, particularly the 9th Norfolks, until April 26th, when the Brigade returned to the Division. Meanwhile, the salient had been prepared for the German onslaught, the defence being organized in two lines—an advanced force holding detached pill-boxes and other strong points, and the main body the battle zone. Although Kemmel Village and Hill were taken and the advanced line withdrawn at the end of April, the Division was not seriously engaged, but was momentarily in expectation of attack. When the Division was sent to the relief of the 19th Division in May, it was placed next to the 14th (French) Division and became part of the II Corps. Towards the end of the month the French were pushed back to Dickebusch Lake and co-operation was offered with the 14th Division in a counter attack.

Accordingly the 11th Essex were sent forward with two battalions of the Chasseurs of the 46th (French) Division (General Philipot), relieving the 14th in the early hours of May 29th. The Essex seized their objective, but the Frenchmen did not make equal progress and as the former's right flank was uncovered, they had to withdraw. The Division remained in this sector until June 7th and then had three weeks' rest. On June 27th the Division was attached to the XIX Corps and went again in the Dickebusch area, in relief of the 46th (French) Division, which at that time was dominated by the Germans from Kemmel Hill. This notwithstanding, there was a spirited enterprise undertaken on July 14th by the 18th Brigade, with two companies of the 1st Middlesex (88rd Division). The attack was entrusted to the 1st West Yorkshires and the 2nd D.L.I., and resulted in the retaking of Ridgewood and Elzenwalle, with nearly 850 prisoners, 25 machine guns and three trench mortars. There were continual raids, daylight and at night, and the 18th Brigade co-operated with the 41st Division on August 8th in two minor operations, in which, however, the Essex were not engaged. It was during this month that part of the 27th American Division, raised in New York, was attached for training. At the beginning of September the Division was in movement to the south once more, there to take an active part in the concluding phase of the war.

The 11th Essex reached Poselhoek on March 26th and marched to Larry Camp, Elverdinghe. Next day it was west of St. Jan ter Bizen and on the 28th marched to Eccke. The King inspected representatives of the Brigade at Steenvoorde, those from the Essex including Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Dumbell, D.S.O., Captain F. P. Freeman, M.C., R.S.M. Larkman and four other ranks, who had distinguished themselves in the recent fighting. Sir Herbert Plumer inspected the Battalion on March 30th. On April 1st the establishment of Lewis guns was increased by the addition of four to twenty. Colonel Dumbell inspected the drafts which had recently joined and found them generally smart and well trained, the majority of whom had seen considerable previous service. On April 8rd the Battalion marched to Godewaersveide—being inspected by the Corps commander on the way—after which it entrained for the Asylum, Ypres, *en route* for West Farm Camp, near Potijze. Training was busily proceeded with. A draft of one officer and 104 other ranks arrived on April 8th and was allotted to the companies so as to make the respective trench strengths up to 144. Constant firing in a southerly direction on April 9th betokened a hostile offensive in the neighbourhood of Fleurbaix and Givenchy and a deserter having come over and given warning of a proposed attack south of Menin Road, the Battalion was ordered to stand-to at 8 a.m. and then moved to the valley between Westhoek and Polygonveld. The expected attack did not mature, however,

and later in the day the Battalion relieved the 2nd Sherwood Foresters. The commanding officer was summoned to a conference, at which it was made known that the enemy had broken through the line in the neighbourhood of Hollebeke and that the attack was expected to spread to the divisional front the next morning, but again the expected did not happen. The Essex went out of the line on April 18th and next day were withdrawn to a camp half a mile to the west of Zillebeke Lake, having at that time a trench strength of 12 officers and 563 other ranks, with six officers and 194 other ranks in the transport lines. April 15th was spent in work upon the line which was to be the main system of defence if the corps line was forced and both officers and N.C.O.'s made themselves thoroughly acquainted with the ground. The Battalion headquarters were transferred on April 16th to the Ypres Ramparts, in the neighbourhood of the Lille Gate, and the next day "B" and "C" Companies were withdrawn to a point immediately west of the Ypres-Wytshaete road, the outpost line being held by "D" and "A" companies. The company commanders were: "A," Captain P. H. Alexander; "B," Lieut. F. S. Pinney; "C," Lieut. E. N. Balme, and "D," Lieut. F. M. Place. The weather was very wintry and there was a heavy snowstorm on April 19th. Two of the companies were employed in making the Doll's House line of defence, whilst their headquarters were moved, during the evening, to Doll's House Lock on the Ypres-Commines Canal. Several casualties resulted on April 21st from gas shelling. Captain John Duke, M.C., who had been promoted only the day before from the adjutancy of the Battalion to the staff captaincy of the Brigade, was mortally wounded on April 21st by a machine gun bullet from an aeroplane, which penetrated the roof of a hut. He had proved himself a fine soldier and his death was much regretted. The funeral took place at Proven. 2nd Lieut. R. E. Licence was appointed adjutant. Another well-known officer also died of wounds in the person of Lieut. Edward Nettleton Balme, M.C., commanding "C" Company. Captain A. K. Fison took over command of "B" Company and Captain F. Pinney was transferred to "C" Company. Work was active on the new defensive line, which ran east of Zillebeke Lake and included Hill 60. Heavy firing was heard from the direction of Kemmel on April 25th, and urgent orders came that the trench was to be completed that night, Battalion headquarters being moved to Zillebeke Bund. Fighting occurred next day in the direction of the Bluff and Voormezele, and report came that the enemy had broken through. Reconnaissance revealed that the line had been pushed back in that direction and a defensive flank had been formed by the 30th Division from Lock 8 to Bedford House. "A" and "D" Companies prepared a position facing south, which could be manned as a defensive flank. The 2nd D.L.I. were withdrawn at dusk from the front and so the Battalion

position became the line of resistance. This was not for long, however, for early on the morning of April 27th "B" and "C" Companies of the Essex were quietly withdrawn to the Doll's House line, the Zillebeke Lake system becoming the outpost line, the latter held by "D" and "A" Companies. The enemy patrols were seen advancing along the Verbranden road, but on reaching Knolls Farm they were engaged by Lewis guns and withdrew to Hill 60 and the ridge running north, leaving advanced machine guns to cover the consolidation of the line. That night news came that Voormezele had been captured. The day's anxieties had their touch of tragedy and humour. The rumour ran that ducks and chickens could be had from an abandoned farm at six francs each, with the further intimation that they could be cooked in the back areas and sent up with the ordinary rations. The Brigade clerk, Lance-Corporal Meade, bought two chickens, which he handed in to be cooked in the Battalion lines, promising to return to the feast about 10 p.m. On proceeding to Brigade headquarters he was hit by a shell and was dead before the hour named by him arrived. Just before 6.30 p.m., just as it was getting dark, a well-known officer, with some of his staff, was seen driving some ducks along the road towards Brandhoek. The picture was most amusing. When the cross-roads were reached, however, two shells fell, the ducks flew and officer and party disappeared. "Instead of the officers' mess having duck and chicken," wrote an onlooker, "I think the transport line and details regaled themselves. The lines were visited for traces of feathers and remains, but none were found, neither, too, could anything be traced of the chickens left by Lance-Corporal Meade."

The anxiety of these days is, perhaps, best illustrated by the experience of Major A. G. Saunders: "In April, when our front line was along the bund of Zillebeke Lake and we had a few posts to the right, I went early one morning for my usual visit. On visiting 'A' Company's headquarters (they were left front line company) I was informed that the right front company had sent word along that a staff officer had instructed them to retire 'because the Germans had broken through on their right.' I immediately made my way along to the right company and had the information confirmed. There was a certain amount of shelling and firing going on away on our right in the direction of Bedford House and the 'Bluff' by the Canal, but as there was a thick mist it was impossible to see more than about 10 yards. The company commander had not received the message himself, but it had come via one of his subalterns, who, unfortunately, left the 'staff officer' for the purpose of delivering his message. By the time the company commander had got to the spot the 'staff officer,' who was obviously a spy, had disappeared. The connecting patrol between our right post and the left post of the Battalion on our right—the front line was a series of breast-work posts at intervals of about 25-30 yards—reported that there

was 'nobody on their right.' I recognized that something was wrong and set out with my orderly to establish connection on the right. I made my way—over the open—to each post amidst a rather awe-inspiring silence, but fortunately the mist still remained thick. Each post was deserted and after what seemed a very long walk—probably about a mile only—I came right up against three pairs of eyes and a Vickers gun pointing straight at me from the thicket near Bedford House. They had seen me before I saw them, but fortunately had kept their heads and not fired. The front line companies of the battalion on our right had acted under false instructions and had retired without warning the battalions either on their right or left! We ascertained later that the enemy had made an attack on the 'Bluff' by the canal and had gained some slight local success. Whether an attack on a larger scale had been planned but postponed at the last owing to the mist we never knew, but there was certainly a gap a mile wide in the British front line at one time! Needless to say, the line was very soon re-established."

Early on April 28th a raid on Manor Farm took place under the command of Captain P. H. Alexander. Two platoons undertook the frontal movement, covered by a platoon on each flank. The men were held up by wire and returned, having sustained one casualty. There was another raid on Manor Farm the next night, when a platoon of "D" Company, under Captain Place, advanced upon it from the railway embankment. The farm was surrounded and rushed, but found to be unoccupied. The platoon retired without casualty. An attack developed at night on Voormezele and Bedford House, the right company of the Essex coming within the barrage. A strong fighting patrol of "D" Company was sent out to Knoll Farm on the last day of April, but also returned without being able to obtain identification. That night was the most peaceful which the Battalion had occupied in this position.

The Battalion went into Brigade reserve on May 2nd, with headquarters at Belgian Chateau. There was still expectation of enemy attack, but on May 4th there was a change, for the French advanced from Mont Nair and made some progress, capturing many prisoners. This operation had the effect of temporarily upsetting the hostile plan of attack. Work was active upon new defences, part of the Battalion being engaged for a time upon the flooding of the district south of the Lille gate. Orders came on May 9th that all men with three or four wound stripes should be employed at the transport lines and, as a consequence, nine men were transferred. The Battalion moved into the front line early on the morning of May 12th, where, next night, 2nd Lieut. Ingham and his platoon reconnoitred the area south of Nieupoort Farm and located the enemy about two hundred yards to the south of the buildings. A French soldier, captured at Kemmel, escaped after fifteen days' captivity and warned the Battalion

to expect an attack. Upon a dark night and in drizzling rain, on May 18th, 2nd Lieut. Groves and 18 other ranks carried out a successful patrol, which yielded considerable information as to the enemy's dispositions. 2nd Lieut. Hirschhorn also went out the next night, searching a number of dug-outs. When retiring along the Verbranden Road and about to enter the Battalion wire the officer was wounded and Sergeant Parker and Private Martin killed by machine gun fire. Yet again 2nd Lieut. Coward and three other ranks patrolled the south side of Zillebeke Lake on May 15th, but found no sign of the enemy until the officer fell into a water-logged shellhole and attracted attention. He was lucky, however, in escaping without a scratch. The enemy 'planes were having some success, for the Essex saw a British machine brought down by five of the enemy and also one of the balloons set on fire by seven hostile aeroplanes. Retaliation took the form of informing the artillery where several Germans could be seen basking in the sun in their shirtsleeves and their fire quickly dispersed them in all directions. 2nd Lieut. F. A. Coward conducted a reconnaissance of Manor Farm, which he found to be in possession of the enemy. He endeavoured to raid it on May 19th, with Lewis gun, bombing and rifle sections, but the party was driven off by the garrison, who were in stronger force than estimated. The 2nd D.L.I. carried out a large scale raid on May 22nd and captured 16 prisoners, the Essex lighting a large bonfire as a guide for their return. Two strong fighting patrols were sent out next day—one under 2nd Lieut. Dickson and the other under Lieut. Buckley. Blauwe Poort Farm was found unoccupied, but Dickson encountered two large enemy parties, which threatened to cut him off and, therefore, forced his retirement. When the Battalion went out of the line on May 24th the 18th Brigade was placed in divisional reserve at Cat Farm, Vlamertinghe. There the men were much engaged in improving the inadequate accommodation and also upon defensive lines east of Vlamertinghe.

AN ATTACK AT SCOTTISH WOOD.

"There was a battery of howitzers just behind us," wrote an officer. "It may have been this that the enemy artillery was after or it may have been known to the enemy that Cat Farm was occupied, for the following night was made hideous by a prolonged and incessant bombardment which caused many casualties and rendered the place almost untenable. The following morning, May 28th, at dawn the Battalion left Cat Farm in light fighting order, with instructions to proceed to the neighbourhood of the Belgian Chateau to await orders. We were all glad enough to get away from Cat Farm, but the fact that we were going to Belgian Chateau shattered any hopes of rest that may have been entertained. Arrived near the Chateau, the day was spent by the troops in the open awaiting orders. Battalion

headquarters were established at the Chateau. During the afternoon company commanders attended for instructions and were informed that on the previous day the French had lost considerable ground at Scottish Wood and the 11th Essex were to re-take it the following morning with the 18th French Chasseurs on their left. There was to be another battalion of Chasseurs on the right, but they did not appear. The objective was some trenches on the farther side of the wood and the depth of the attack was about 1,200 yards. From the jumping-off trench there was open country for about 300 yards, then about 800 yards of fairly dense wood to be covered. Observation was difficult, as the enemy had outposts right up to the near edge of the wood, and during that evening, whilst reconnoitring, Captain F. M. Place (O.C. 'D' Company) ventured too close and was wounded, whilst his runner was killed. At that time we were extremely short of officers. Spanish 'flu' was very prevalent and several had gone sick with it. 'A' Company was commanded by Captain A. Alexander, 'B' Company by Captain Fison, 'C' Company by Captain Pinney, 'D' Company by 2nd Lieut. Groves."

The advance was successful and by 5.30 a.m. Battalion headquarters were assured that each company had reached its objective. Early in the action Captain Fison was wounded. Captain Pinney took over command of the line and he recalls that a C.S.M. remarked to him, "This is the sort of thing people get the V.C. for, sir," only to receive the emphatic if ungrammatical reply, "Not in this ——— Battalion, they don't; get on with it." The sergeant-major was subsequently awarded the D.C.M., "and deserved it," said his commanding officer. Nine prisoners were taken of the 18th R.I.R. The right flank was exposed owing to the non-appearance of the French unit and enemy snipers made communication with the rear almost impossible. Lack of information caused Lieut. W. Ingham—in civilian life a Church of England curate—to pluckily make his way forward with two runners and to return with a detailed report. Two platoons of the 2nd D.L.I. were ordered to form a defensive flank in the threatened direction. Meanwhile, despite considerable casualties, the Battalion had consolidated the position and captured a machine gun. The Battalion was relieved that night by the 18th Chasseurs, but whilst the three front line companies reported in due course, there was much anxiety concerning the reserve company, whose whereabouts could not be ascertained. However, Lieut.-Colonel Dumbell, after an exhaustive search, located them in the G.H.Q. second line awaiting relief and they were evacuated without casualty to the rendezvous at Belgian Chateau.

Captain Fison's entries in his diary for those eventful days afford an interesting glimpse of life in the Battalion at this time.

May 26th (Sunday). Another fine day. At nine we began some inspections, but were interrupted at the start by a message from headquarters for a working party of fifty to

parade at once. Apparently it being a misty day, they had decided to get the work done by day while visibility was poor. After the party had gone, I spent the day on various business, including a visit to headquarters. The party returned at two o'clock. A few minutes later the General came by and told me he was going to try to induce Colonel Dumbell to go down to the transport lines for a rest, in which case I should find myself in command of the Battalion for the time being. After this I went for a stroll with Groves to visit the scene of the bombardment the afternoon before; it was a proper picture of desolation. On the way back we picked a large bunch of yellow iris and brought them back to add to the gaiety of the mess. At tea time a message came over the wire from headquarters, telling me to go there to take over; accordingly, shortly after five I transferred myself. About this time another gas shell "strafe" was in progress on the scene of yesterday afternoon's, but didn't last long. After tea went for a stroll with the C.O., picking up Place, and we sat on a bank admiring the scene, which was now peaceful. The conversation turned on cycling and rowing. A little before seven we all repaired to headquarters mess for a drink, finding the Doc. asleep in the grass. At a quarter past seven, Place having departed, things were a good deal spoilt by a gas shell bombardment, mostly mustard gas this time, right on top of us. It was pretty intense at first and lasted spasmodically till half-past eight, at which hour Colonel Dumbell left on his horse. Shells fell in one or two bivouacs and smashed some rifles and equipment, but without causing any more casualties at the time. I am now left in command of the Battalion. In the evening Place came in and played bridge with Licence, Willett and the Doctor, while I occupied myself with writing up this diary. To bed at midnight.

May 27th.—Was roused at one o'clock by a great din outside. The Boche was putting up a heavy bombardment with H.E. and gas all over the place, and things in our neighbourhood were most unpleasantly warm. All the headquarters people were got down into the cellar as quickly as possible, but not before one or two casualties had been caused. Two poor fellows were killed on the road just outside and another wounded. All our wires were cut, both to Brigade and companies, so we couldn't tell what was going on. Two cyclist orderlies were sent to Brigade, but did not return. Most of the Battalion were out on working parties in various directions. After an hour or two the bombardment decreased in violence, but all sorts of gas still kept coming over—phosgene, mustard and blue cross—and respirators were in great request, as we had, unfortunately, no gas-proof accommodation. The working parties returned gradually in small parties as things began to get quieter, and we sorted ourselves out and the men had breakfast between four and five. We had had a good many casualties, about fourteen

wounded and hit by pieces of gas shell. About six the orderlies returned from Brigade; situation still rather obscure. The French have been pushed in in front of Dickebusch, but the exact amount of ground lost is not yet known, and we are to remain "standing to." Soon after nine the wire to Brigade was mended, and about the same time an order came through for the Battalion to be prepared to counter-attack the Boche in front of Dickebusch. This looked like being a distinctly exciting event for my first day in command of the Battalion. I was soon to be relieved of this responsibility, however, for a wire came through ordering Major Canning, of the West Yorks, to assume temporary command in the absence of Colonel Dumbell. The Battalion had already got on the move, when Major Canning turned up at half-past ten and took over command. I remained at headquarters for the present to assist him. We left all baggage in the present area, having no means of shifting it, under a guard, and moved across to take up our new headquarters at Belgian Chateau. It was a clear morning, but owing to the fact that a lot of camouflage had lately been put up along the road and we moved in small parties, the Boche didn't spot us, and there was only one casualty on the road, from a stray shrapnel. It appeared unlikely any further move would be made during the afternoon, so after lunch we all tried to get a bit of sleep. A little after three Colonel Dumbell turned up and relieved Major Canning of his command, I, myself, rejoining my company. The Colonel seemed to think the attack might not come off after all, but he has received orders as to the situation in case it does and we were to go off at once to reconnoitre. We should have to form up in a line with English Wood; "A" and "B" Companies in front, with "C" in support and "D" in reserve, the objective being our old front line and the distance to cover being about a thousand yards. I started on my reconnaissance at five, with Williams as orderly, first having gone round the company. The Boche guns were pretty busy dropping shells all over the roads near the front and at one time it nearly reached the intensity of a barrage, but I got my business done without adventure. Rations came up soon after dark to Belgian Chateau. News came through about this time that Place was wounded on his reconnoitring trip, having got mixed up in some sort of scrap in the Wood and had his thumb shot off by an explosive bullet. Groves consequently left me to take over command of "D" Company and I am left with only Buckley. My present headquarters are in a small dug-out just behind one of the posts we were making lately when in Brigade reserve. Buckley and I supped off bully beef and tea and tried to get a little rest, with moderate success.

May 28th.—Operation orders for the attack came round at half-past twelve a.m. Having assimilated them, I called in my remaining N.C.O.'s, not very many now in number (a considerable

number of the company have gone sick the last few days with gas poisoning, including three out of the four stretcher-bearers) and gave them the necessary orders for the attack, having explained the situation. The company paraded at half-past one and I led them off in single file. It was a lovely bright moonlight night and I had no difficulty in getting into position, there being no shelling on the route. We were supposed to get into touch with a French battalion on our right, the line between us for the attack being a railway, but they didn't turn up in the assembly position. There were, on the other hand, a company of French in English Wood. I found a fellow in my company, Griffiths by name, who could talk French well and went across with him to this company. It turned out, however, they had nothing to do with the attack and didn't even know about it, so couldn't help us much. Zero hour was four o'clock. It began to get light about three and from this point onwards things began to get lively in our neighbourhood. All kinds of light signals kept going up in front of Scottish Wood on the right, both French and German, and there was some pretty active shelling in that direction. On our own front the Boche was firing intermittently with 4.2's and using a lot of double green lights; he also kept putting very heavy shells a little way behind, but we came off all right, although well in the open, being just between the two zones of fire, till a few minutes before zero, when he put several shells just on the right of my front wave. According to operation orders, there was to have been a heavy bombardment by our own people starting at ten minutes to four; this, however, for some reason, did not come off. At four punctually a barrage started and we were off. Fritz didn't reply at once, though his S.O.S. went up pretty quickly. We got into trouble first with our own barrage; one of our own batteries refused to lift and kept firing into a small wood we had to pass, which rather upset things. I checked the troops near me and tried to form them up and get them round this point, and the support and reserve companies got right on top of us, which badly mixed things up. Just as I had got things more or less sorted out and was advancing again on the left of the obstruction, the Boche decided to put down a barrage on us. One of his aeroplanes had been flying low over us a few minutes ago and it was doubtless responsible for this salute. About twenty minutes past four a whizzbang arriving at high speed burst three yards in front of me and left me rather stunned and dazed. . . . There were a number of casualties at the aid post, including some French, but the Doctor soon found time to attend to me, after which I went in to report to the C.O., who, in return, provided me with a whisky and soda. There were two French liaison officers at headquarters, one of whom could talk English, both in a state of great effervescence. One or two Boche prisoners were outside; one, I was told, had been on his knees to the C.O. in the firm belief he was going to be shot.

The Battalion resumed working on the defensive line east of Vlamertinghe on May 30th, and Major A. G. Saunders took over temporary command whilst Colonel Dumbell resumed his interrupted period of rest. He rejoined on June 7th.

The Battalion suffered casualties at the opening of June from shell-fire. On the 2nd three men were killed and four wounded of "C" Company by a shell which burst in the hop factory whilst they were bathing and the next day a direct hit on Battalion headquarters killed three men of the pioneer platoon and wounded three others. Lieut. P. R. Ambrose took over the command of "D" Company on June 4th, and three days later the Essex marched to Proven station *en route* for camp near Carmette. There the Battalion underwent four days' musketry practice, during which the influenza epidemic made ravages, no fewer than fifty being excused duty or sent to hospital in one day. "A" Company won the Brigade prize for field firing in the Vale de Laubies on June 11th, the day on which influenza reached its height, 87 being sent to hospital and 66 excused duty. The Battalion went back to Proven on June 12th for work on the Poperinghe defences. "B" Company had proved itself the best shooting company in the Battalion, No. 7 platoon the best platoon, with No. 1 platoon ("A" Company) first in the Lewis gun competition. Private C. Booth was the champion marksman. The Battalion went to School Camp on June 20th, at St. Jan ter Bizen, where the Corps commander (Lieut.-General Sir Claud Jacob) congratulated it upon the good work done in the counter-attack near Dickebusch Lake. On June 27th the Battalion took over billets in Chinese Camp and next day went into divisional reserve at Waratah Camp, from which the C.O. took out reconnoitring parties of officers on horseback in the early morning (about 3 a.m.), relying on the mist to conceal them from enemy observers. Three casualties were suffered there. The 2nd D.L.I. were relieved on Dickebusch Bund on July 2nd, and the Battalion side-stepped to take over a two company front from the 1st Buffs on the night of July 5th. It was on this evening that 2nd Lieut. Clayden and Sergeant Scurrall searched the trench beyond the bombing block which had been held by the 11th Essex Lewis gunners and 2nd D.L.I. on the evening of May 28th, where they found a Lewis gun complete and one slightly damaged, a Vickers gun, with two belts, and a German officer's map cases and maps. The former were lost when the enemy counter-attacked. The body of a man of the 11th Essex was recovered and buried, also those of sergeants of other units. The days passed quietly, for the most part, except that on one occasion the German transport came very near to the line east of Ridge Wood, and was scattered by fire from the 21st and 42nd Batteries, R.F.A.; it was dispersed again the next night. Two Alsations gave themselves up and on July 12th the Battalion passed into Brigade

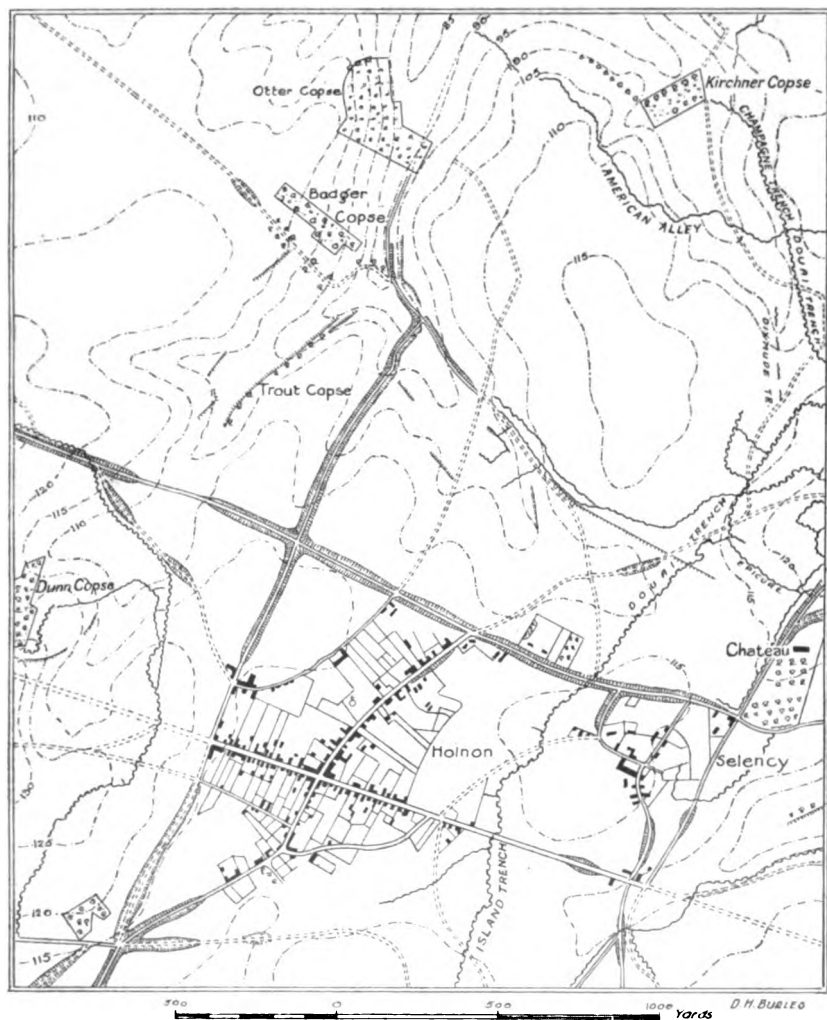
reserve, with headquarters in Gretna Farm. The other two battalions of the Brigade—2nd D.L.I. and 1st West Yorkshires—assaulted the enemy line from the south-eastern edge of Ridge Wood to Elzanwalle Sidings, capturing all objectives. The prisoners numbered seven officers and 350 other ranks, together with 17 light machine guns and two heavy trench mortars. The Essex were in reserve and “A” Company was utilized for carrying ammunition to the front line. On July 15th the Battalion moved to the Ouderdom area, with headquarters at Medoc Farm. From thence it was transferred on July 28rd to Malin House area, where Major Saunders took over temporary command. There companies of the 1st Battalion 105th American Infantry were attached for instruction.

“At this time,” wrote Lieut. Gordon Murray, “the Americans were being sent up to the front line by companies to be shown the ropes. This entailed a lot of moving about for them, generally by night, of course, which must have been very trying. (We preferred to stay in or out of the trenches and hated the journey backwards and forwards). Their commissariat department, being new to the job, was unable to cope with these frequent changes and sometimes let them down badly. But they took their part in the war very seriously and were keen to learn. The discipline was a bit free and easy. I remember a U.S. corporal who was at our headquarters with a party of signallers. We wanted them to do something or other and they didn’t quite fancy the idea. In the end the Corporal told our C.O. quietly but firmly that his men would rather not do what he had ordered. This was awkward, but the C.O. couldn’t do anything with them and just had to let it pass. Just before dawn one morning I was walking across country to the front line, taking advantage of the dim light to save myself the longer journey by communication trench which would have been necessary by day, when, to my horror, I came across a whole company of Americans lying about in the open. I found their officers, who explained that they had lost their way and were waiting for daylight to find out where they were. I told them as promptly that the enemy would soon show them where they were if they stayed there much longer. We got the men roused up and moved into the nearest trench as soon as possible, and fortunately before sunrise. I was then able to tell them how to get to the part of the line they were looking for.”

The cheery philosophy of some of the American soldiers was shown by a man who was hit in the arm and on his way back from the front line to the dressing station passed the Essex headquarters. An officer asked him if he was wounded badly and he said, “No,” but asked the way to the American dressing station. He was told it was back at Mic-Mac Farm, but that the Essex M.O. would dress his wound. He spat and then said,

"Dressing station at Mic-Mac Farm, field kitchens at Rouen, heavy artillery in the U.S.A.—Gawd help America."

It was noted on July 30th that the day was quiet, so far as the telephone was concerned, but that communication had been kept up with Brigade by means of runners, lamp, buzzer, pigeons, dogs and rockets. The last night of July was a very unfortunate one for casualties. Lieut. Walter Felix Dickson was killed by a sniper. "D" Company lost C.S.M. Gasson and one other rank killed and 13 wounded. The enemy raided the right front of the Brigade, but the Battalion only received a salvo of a few shells. August also opened with casualties, for a ration party of "C" Company was caught by a 5.9 and sustained a loss of three killed and four wounded. Companies of the 106th Americans joined on August 2nd and next day headquarters had one killed and two wounded by shell-fire. On August 6th the Battalion was relieved and went into Brigade reserve at Mic-Mac Farm. Two days later companies of the West Yorkshires and Cornwalls attacked the enemy's front line trenches on the Dickebusch—Scherpenberg front in co-operation with the attack of the 41st Division on the right, but met with little success. There was an alarm that the enemy had filtered through the front line after an intense bombardment on August 11th and the Essex were ordered to occupy battle positions, but nothing materialized. The day after the Battalion went into divisional reserve, with headquarters near Anjou Farm, where Colonel Dumbell resumed command. A move was made to the Medoc Farm area on August 17th, where, four days later, the Battalion was relieved by 3/105th Americans and proceeded by 'bus to Acquin for a rest. There was much practice in attack, after which, on September 2nd, the Battalion was transferred to Mericourt l'Abbé. A brigade boxing tournament was held on September 7th, when the majority of events were won by the Essex. Then, on September 11th, the unit commenced its journey by way of Vaire to the front line near Monchy-Lagache, with headquarters in a quarry due south of Atilly (near St. Quentin Wood). The frontage was approximately 4,500 yards. The 3/59th French Infantry were on the right and the 1st Gloucesters on the other flank. The 11th Essex were entering upon the last phase of the Great War, which was to end, for them, with the march to the Rhine.



Area north of Holnon, showing Otter, Badger and Trout Copses.

THE LAST PHASE.

When the 6th Division reached the Somme front the turn of the tide had set in and the enemy were being pressed back. The Division became part of the IX Corps (Lieut.-General Sir W. P. Braithwaite) of the Fourth Army, and remained with it until the close of the war, having as companion divisions the 1st, 32nd and 46th. The 32nd Division had reached Holnon Wood near to St. Quentin, when it was relieved by the 6th Division. The 1st Division was on the left and the 34th (French Division) on the other flank, being thus on the extreme right of the British Army. These divisions were deputed to take the heights which commanded St. Quentin on the south and west. As a preliminary thereto, the 6th Division, on September 17th, endeavoured to improve its position. The 18th Brigade was ordered to attack Holnon Wood and Badger Copse, in co-operation with the 34th (French) Division. The Brigade reached the edge of Holnon Wood after suffering severe casualties, but by 11 a.m. had secured Trout Copse, Badger Copse falling later. The issue was very fiercely contested at Holnon Village, which was taken and retaken, but at the close of the day neither side was certain which was in possession. The French took Savy Wood and thus secured the flank of the IX Corps. It was decided to press forward with the general attack on September 18th. "Standing on the east edge of the wood, a bare glaxis-like slope, devoid of cover, except for two or three shell-trap copses, stretched away for 3,000 yards to the high ground overlooking St. Quentin. There was no sign of life and very few trenches could be seen, though it was known that they were there, as the Fifth Army had held the position in March, 1918. It was found afterwards that the Germans had camouflaged their trenches with thistles, which here covered the ground to a height in many places of eighteen inches. At the highest point about the centre of the divisional area of attack was a network of trenches known later as the Quadrilateral—a name of bad omen to the 6th Division—and which, like its namesake at Leuze Wood, could be reinforced from the back slopes of the hill. An examination of the battlefield after the 24th September also revealed several narrow sunken roads filled with wire. The position was one of great natural strength and, in addition, the whole of the right was dominated by heights in the area to be attacked by the French. Lastly, adequate time could not be given to the brigades for reconnaissance owing to the imperative necessity of pushing on to guard the flank of corps farther north. Troops had not seen the ground they had to attack over and rain and smoke obscured the few landmarks existing on 18th September." The

71st Brigade (right) attacked at 5.20 a.m. from Holnon and Selency to the Quadrilateral and the 16th Brigade from the Quadrilateral (exclusive) to Fresnoy-le-Petit. The six tanks attached were of little assistance. The former brigade met with obstinate resistance and made little progress. The 2nd D.L.I., of the 18th Brigade, cleared Holnon village, but were subsequently driven out by heavy fire from Round and Manchester Hills, which had not been taken by the French. The 16th Brigade made a much more pronounced advance of 3,000 yards and at one time were in Fresnoy-le-Petit, though they could not hold it. Fighting continued throughout the next day, particularly about the Quadrilateral, but no distinctive advance was made and the combat was broken off to permit of reorganization. On September 24th the Division attacked again, the 18th Brigade (with 1st Leicesters) being on the right, with the 16th Brigade on the left. The French were again on the right and the 1st Division on the left, with a mission against Fresnoy and Gricourt. One of the four tanks had the misfortune to turn turtle in a minefield. The 18th Brigade had to fight hard and long for success. The 11th Essex obtained a slight hold on one face of the Quadrilateral and the 1st West Yorkshires secured a lodgment on Douai Trench running south from Strong point. The D.L.I. could make no impression upon Holnon village. The French, however, were successful against Round Hill and part of Manchester Hill, and came up in line. The 16th Brigade was also able, with the help of the tanks, to wrench the northern face of the Quadrilateral from the enemy. Then, late on the moonlight night, the 1st Leicesters went in on the 18th Brigade front and secured Douai Trench. During the next day (25th) the trench was cleared by close fighting and in time the whole of the objectives were secured. That night the rest of the Quadrilateral fell to the two brigades. For this meritorious feat of arms congratulations were received from the Army and Corps commanders and G.O.C. 1st Division. Before the Division was relieved on September 29th-30th, Fayet had been surrounded on three sides and the French had completed the capture of Manchester Hill. The 1st and 32nd Divisions broke through the Hindenburg Line and then about Ramicourt and Sequehart they were relieved by the 6th Division, who had instructions to seize the ground in the direction of Bohain. The attack undertaken on October 8th, in conjunction with the 30th American Division (right) and the 42nd French Division, was very successful, both the 71st and 16th Brigades going well forward and obtaining their objectives. By nightfall Mericourt was in the hands of the Division, with 30 officers and 1,100 other ranks. The next day the fight went on with vigour, the 6th Division having taken over a portion of the territory of the Americans. Bohain fell and the prisoners increased to nearly 2,000. Difficulty was experienced in dealing with delay-action

mines, but, nevertheless, the advance was continued on October 10th, and then the 18th Brigade, which had relieved the 71st Brigade, was held up in a small operation on 11th-12th October. Pressure was maintained and the next effort was against the high ground east of Selle River to Riqueval Wood, the 6th and 46th Divisions being transferred to the northern flank to attack south-east and east in an attempt to obtain enfilade fire. "The task allotted to the 6th Division was a difficult one. It had to issue fanwise from the village of Vaux Audigny on a 1,500 yards front, advancing 2,500-8,000 yards to a front of 5,000 yards. The 1st Division was to pass through it and push on towards the Sambre Canal. The attack was to be made under a barrage of eight brigades of Field Artillery and light machine guns. The IX Corps employed on this occasion 172 60-pounders and heavy howitzers." The 6th Division had the 18th and 16th Brigades in line, with the 71st Brigade in reserve, and they were covered by a barrage from eight brigades of Field Artillery, together with eighty machine guns of the 2nd Life Guards Machine Gun Battalion and 6th Division Machine Gun Battalion. The latter's instructions were to search the reverse slopes of the spurs in order to prevent enfilade fire up the valleys. Three tanks were allotted to each of the 18th and 16th Brigades, with the special mission of over-running the trench line, passing north from Andigny-les-Fermes, which was thought to be protected by uncut wire. In addition to the difficulty of frontage mentioned above, both Brigades had to debouch from the village of Vaux Audigny, which was liable to be shelled, and, furthermore, the 18th Brigade, which was deputed to attack Bellevue Spur, faced E.S.E., whereas the direction of advance was S.E. Despite heavy shelling the Brigades took up their assembly positions. The 18th Brigade formed up on the line of the railway, with its left at Vaux Audigny Station, and attacked on a two battalion front. The 11th Essex were on the right and 2nd D.L.I. on the left, with the 1st West Yorkshires in reserve. Part of the objective lay between the village of Andigny-les-Fermes and a point 500 yards west of La Vallée Mulatre. Each battalion had two companies in line and two in support. Uncut wire caused the loss of the barrage and this fact and the mist were responsible for some loss of direction. The tanks, losing their way, joined the right company of the 11th Essex, who were advancing arm-in-arm in the fog, and went in the direction of Regnicourt, which was captured in conjunction with the 139th Brigade of the 46th Division. They then made their way to Andigny-les-Fermes, which had been previously taken by the 1st and 46th Divisions. The left of the Essex lent their aid to clear Bellevue Spur. The 2nd D.L.I. was checked for a while upon the northern slopes of the spur until reinforced by two companies of the 1st West Yorkshires, when the advance was resumed. "The 6th Division, at 10.30 a.m., had reached the first objective along its

whole front and the 1st Division was passing through. Owing to the fog the fighting had been confused and in some places severe, as the enemy, consisting of portions of the 63rd (Naval), 15th Reserve and 24th Divisions, resisted with considerable determination. For the remainder of the day the front of the 6th Division was covered by the 1st Division, and the counter attack from La Vallée Mulatre was forestalled by the attack of the latter Division." After a short rest, the 6th Division occupied the front from Bayeul to a short distance north of Mazinghien.

"There now occurred a sudden change in the type of country. Instead of open rolling downs, there was a multiplicity of small fields, divided by high thick-set hedges trained on wire, which proved formidable obstacles. The enemy had good positions for his artillery in the Bois l'Evêque, and on the east bank of the Canal de la Sambre, protected from the danger of being rushed by that obstacle, and it was evident that he intended to put up a determined fight in the strong position thus afforded." The Division attacked at 1.20 a.m. on October 23rd, with the 1st Division on the right and 25th Division on the left. Three sections of 301st American Tank Company afforded valuable aid. Despite the fog, the 18th Brigade (right), although delayed by a gas-shelled area, went forward and by night the 2nd D.L.I. had reached the Canal and the 1st West Yorkshires were endeavouring to make good the second objective. The 71st Brigade was not so successful owing to the enclosed country, but, nevertheless, at the end of the day it had worked half-way through the Bois l'Evêque. The 16th relieved the 71st Brigade and made further progress during the night, and the West Yorkshires, of the 18th Brigade, completed the task assigned to them. The latter Brigade secured a bridgehead across the canal at Oisy, at which point, on October 30th-31st, the Division was relieved. The infantry brigades had ended their last fight, though the artillery went on and at the close was in the neighbourhood of Avesnes. The Division had suffered over 6,000 casualties in the last weeks of fighting, but had captured 96 officers and 3,505 other ranks, with 32 guns, 53 trench mortars and 527 machine guns.

HOLNON WOOD AND ST. QUENTIN WOOD.

The 11th Essex front on September 13th extended from 500 yards south of the southern edge of Holnon Wood to the northern edge of St. Quentin Wood. Forward posts were established at night on the eastern edge of Holnon Wood. Little resistance was encountered, though the area was heavily shelled with yellow cross gas. The next day "D" Company moved farther forward and garrisoned a post on the railway in front of Holnon Wood, whilst "A" and "B" Companies established an outpost line in front of both St. Quentin and Holnon Woods, there still being extensive gas shelling. Strong points were constructed next

day, when 52 officers and men were wounded by artillery fire, which was increasingly severe. At night (15th-16th) "D" Company moved to the left flank of the Battalion front, upon relief, and "A" Company became Battalion reserve, headquarters being in the vicinity of the level crossing north of the east end of Attily. "D" and "B" Companies carried out a minor operation by which they established themselves in trenches on the north-eastern edge of St. Quentin Wood, in preparation for the general attack, planned for September 18th. Three officers became casualties from gas poisoning, whilst seven other ranks were killed and 47 wounded, mainly suffering from gas. The woods had been drenched with gas and the sunshine rendered the conditions very trying. The Battalion had the satisfaction of receiving the congratulations of Brigade and Divisional commanders. One hundred prisoners were captured with four machine guns. The Battalion took part in a further operation on the 17th, this time with the Brigade. The objectives were Badger Copse, Otter Copse and Front Copse, all to the north-east of St. Quentin Wood, with headquarters in the latter. The enemy put down an accurate barrage on the forming-up trenches just at the moment that the Division's barrage opened and heavy casualties were caused, particularly to "D" Company. The survivors of both "B" and "D" Companies, however, went forward with great pluck and pertinacity and eight members of the latter, under 2nd Lieut. Alexander Grant Akerman, reached a point within one hundred yards of the objective, but were then held up by machine guns, Lieut. Akerman being killed. Only three survivors returned. "B" Company established one post on the objective and consolidated upon being reinforced by two platoons. Outposts were pushed forward during the night and the position prepared for the advance of the 6th Brigade next day. When the latter took over, the Essex were withdrawn, suffering many casualties in the process from gas shells. In addition to one officer killed, two were wounded. Sixteen other ranks were killed and 61 wounded or missing. The ten prisoners taken were of the 168th Regiment, with three machine guns.

"The battle had reached that stage when we were feeling our way forward," wrote an officer, when recalling memories of that time, "the enemy fighting a rearguard action, mainly with gas shelling and machine guns. The gas in particular clung about the woods and sunken roads and was a great nuisance. We had pushed outposts forward towards the farther side of the wood and, hardly knowing where the enemy were, were expecting a counter-attack at any time. The area was large and the C.O. would have horses brought up so that he could get round the company posts along the roads and clearings. It was on one of these rounds when I was with him that he heard of a man who was reported as having been found asleep when on sentry duty. He had the wretched man brought before him and, my word,

what a lecture he gave him ! Told him how he had risked the safety of the Army at such a time and also gave him to understand the penalty to which he had made himself liable. He was terrible in his anger and so overpowered the man with his bulk and fierceness that he crumpled and had to be held up."

ANOTHER QUADRILATERAL.

The Battalion was disposed, under the temporary command of Major Saunders, in Dead Wood, with headquarters in a gully near Attily level-crossing. There, for a few days, it reorganized and then went to dug-outs and shelters in Leaf Wood, which had been constructed by the pioneer platoon. On September 22nd the company commanders reconnoitred the ground over which the attack was to be made on the 24th, Colonel Dumbell being attached to the Brigade to assist the Brigadier, who had been injured in a dump explosion. The Essex moved off to an assembly position on the night of September 23rd. Headquarters were in a quarry on the eastern edge of St. Quentin Wood, with an advanced report centre 1,400 yards west of the objective. Next morning the Battalion took part in the attack, with the Quadrilateral as the objective. "A" and "C" were the leading companies, with "D" in support and "B" in reserve. At 5 a.m. a standing barrage of three minutes was to fall on Douai Trench, the Battalion having orders to make use of it for the purpose of getting as close as possible thereto. It was hoped to find the wire sufficiently cut to enable the infantry to pass through. Four tanks were attached and the Battalion had orders to wait outside the wire if it proved impassable in order that the ranks might cut a way through. The wire, however, was in thick belts, cunningly placed and hidden from direct observation. The artillery fire had had practically no effect upon it. The Essex were consequently held up for some time. Only one tank was in view, and that stuck 200 yards from the enemy line, so that the infantry had to do their best to get through. "A" Company worked round the wire to a point outside the northern boundary of the Quadrilateral and there forced a way into Douai Trench, down which they worked by bombing, capturing nine prisoners. They were unable to continue their way southwards because of the shallow depth and the wire, which was pegged to the bottom. Strong opposition was experienced from the northern face of the Quadrilateral and Lieut. Pinney and 2nd Lieut. Watkins were wounded in bombing down the section joining Douai with North Alley. 2nd Lieut. Owen having been wounded in the initial stage, the Company was without officers. "C" Company, meantime, had gallantly cut a way through the wire and succeeded in establishing posts in Douai Trench under cover of machine gun fire and rifle grenades and the use of a smoke screen. The position of the Battalion was not strong, however, for the enemy were on both sides of them in

Douai Trench and also held the trenches close by, so that reinforcements had to make their way as best they could in the open. Bombing attacks were undertaken in an effort to clear the western face of the Quadrilateral, but here, again, the depth and wire, together with the heavy fire, proved insuperable obstacles. By 8.50 a.m. "C" Company had fought their way farther along Douai, but as the Battalion on the right was not on its objective, the Company extended southwards and made a block. At the point where Valley Trench joined Douai considerable trouble was experienced by small-arms fire, particularly from snipers located in the high ground of the Quadrilateral. Progress was, however, made along Epicure Alley and a post established. Six prisoners were taken, with five machine guns. At 1 p.m. further hold was established in Epicure, but the untaken portions of Douai obstinately refused to give in. A combined movement was necessary if an impression was to be made on the Quadrilateral, so Major Saunders got into touch with the K.S.L.I., on the left, and arranged with them to bomb to the south-east along the western face of the Quadrilateral, whilst reinforcements were sent to Douai and Epicure in order to bomb north-east and link up with the Shropshires. This movement, if successful, would surround the garrison. Co-operation was arranged with the Field Artillery, Stokes mortars and light trench mortars. Progress was made, but it was not sufficient to warrant the casualties likely to be incurred, so the movement was stopped and one post was withdrawn. It was decided to relieve "C" Company during the night and operations were resumed next morning, when "A" Company, which had been reorganized, again worked forward, despite the shallow trench, and fire from machine guns. The enemy had placed strong detachments on the ridge and land south-east of Douai trench, so that the re-establishment of the post abandoned the night before was delayed. Good progress was, however, made along Douai northwards and by 7 a.m., after a bombing attack, the junction of Douai and Valley was in our hands and a block established there. This afforded a covered means of approach from the western end of Valley Trench and the wire was cleared away in front of the enemy block, as a result of which increasing pressure was applied. At 8.30 a.m. lateral touch was secured between the two companies along Douai and six hours later Epicure had been cleared. Posts were established and small parties bombed along Enghien from north and south and also along the trench running across the Quadrilateral and joining Douai and Breton Alley. A post in this area was overcome and thereafter rapid progress was made. By 3.50 p.m. the Battalion was in a position to attack Etretat Alley from the south and establish a post in the sunken road. By 8 o'clock that night the whole Quadrilateral was reported encircled, "A" Company having worked down Etretat

to the sunken road. The hold of the enemy upon this formidable work had been shaken, but they were still clinging to parts of it, particularly to the southern prolongation of Argonne trench, which was bombed in the early morning of September 26th. There matters rested for a time, until the evening of the 27th, when patrols were sent forward to the New Argonne, which was occupied at midnight as an outpost line. Thence patrols went out again and reported that small enemy parties were still in Eparges Trench. During the morning strong fighting patrols ejected the enemy and had established posts there by 4.30 p.m., the Germans retiring. Brest Trench was occupied later and touch obtained with the 1st Bufts and the 2nd D.L.I. In the early hours of the morning of September 29th, under orders from Brigade, the outpost line was withdrawn to the western outskirts of Fayet preparatory to handing over to the French. The disposition of the Battalion at that time was: One company in Eparges Trench as outposts, another in New Argonne, a third in support in Etretat and Epicure and the fourth in reserve in Douai. The captures consisted of 16 prisoners and eleven light and two heavy machine guns, among other booty.

The following are the observations of Major Saunders, commanding 11th Essex, upon this gallant and successful fight against great odds: The tanks were unfortunately not very successful. Two of them were apparently destroyed (one by fire and one by a land mine) before they caught up the infantry. One tank ("Miser") got as far as Valley Trench, while another ("Milly") apparently lost her way and must have gone some way north of our boundary. She was afterwards found inside the Quadrilateral on her side, but she did not go through the wire on our front and was not even seen by our left company. The smoke barrage was too thick and dark considering the time of zero and all the tanks lost their way in it. Even officers found difficulty in keeping their runners in view and if it had not been that a compass bearing had been given it would have been very difficult for the companies to keep direction. The enemy opposition was very strong at all points. We encountered a new regiment (28th), which had only been in the line 86 hours, and they fought with great vigour. Over 60 enemy dead were counted in the Quadrilateral, but they got away most of their wounded. The place was well stocked with S.A.A. bombs (two kinds), T.M. ammunition, and there were a very large number of machine guns, some of which were undoubtedly taken away as the enemy were forced back. Every traverse had a sandbag full of bombs suspended to it and in places there were bundles of five potato masher bombs tied together, probably for use against tanks. The enemy artillery was not heavy, but machine guns were very active. Very little damage was done to the Quadrilateral or the wire by our preliminary bombardment, except at the northern end of Douai trench, which was unoccupied

—and had not been occupied for some time—and full of wire pegged down to the bottom. The southern end of Douai trench in the Quadrilateral, which was very strongly held, had not been touched. No gaps were made in the wire. Unfortunately, our heavy guns caused us casualties by bombarding Douai Trench and Epicure Valley after we were in possession. Very great assistance was rendered by medium and light trench mortars, both in bombarding strong points and machine guns, but also in covering our bombing attacks. Our initial success was largely due—apart from the gallantry of all ranks in the assaulting companies—to the co-operation of light guns, rifles and rifle bombers, together with smoke grenades.

The casualties were heavy, one officer (2nd Lieut. Athol Isdale Chappy) was killed and five wounded, whilst 21 other ranks were killed and 149 wounded.

The Battalion refitted and bivouacked in Valley Wood, south of Vraignes, and there, on October 1st, received a draft of 183 other ranks from the North Staffords. The congratulations of Army and Corps commanders were received for the part played by the Battalion in fighting on September 24th. On October 4th the Essex marched to Bellenglise and were allotted trenches in the old Hindenburg system north of that village. Two days later the Battalion was sent to Magny-la-Fosse and took over trenches 800 yards west of that point. Next day the Essex entrenched themselves in a valley in the forward area, in rear of the 71st Brigade, in readiness for the attack on October 8th. About 1 p.m. that day "A" and "B" Companies had relieved two companies of the 1st K.S.L.I. and "C" two of the 1st Leicesters, of the 71st Brigade, Battalion headquarters being in a sunken road in the vicinity of Mont Crepain. The French had failed to take Mannequin Wood, so that "B" Company, on the right, came under direct fire and did not arrive until some time later. By 6 p.m., however, the Battalion was consolidating on the line, with two sections of the 6th M.G. Battalion. The casualties were three other ranks killed and 14 wounded. The Essex bivouacked around Jonnecourt Farm on October 10th. The next day orders came to take up assembly positions east of Bohain, "A" and "C" Companies having the special mission that when the 71st Brigade had reached their objectives they would form a defensive flank. The Brigade was, however, held up by machine gun fire, so that the companies did not move forward. At 11 p.m. the Battalion took over a portion of the front line, from which fighting patrols were sent forward, in one of which 2nd Lieut. H. J. Widgery was killed. Near Brancoucourt, on the way to Bohain, the Battalion came across an example of the difficulty of using cavalry in modern warfare. A well-known regiment had evidently been in action and had been held up by barbed wire entanglements, where the enemy had shot them down at his convenience. A couple of machine guns

might have done the whole business. The ground was strewn with dozens of splendid horses.

The Essex took part in the fighting on October 12th, when the objective was an enemy trench along the ridge. At 4.45 p.m. the barrage lifted after a quarter of an hour's duration and "B" and "D" Companies went forward against the post held by 8th Regiment, 5th Division (German), which included men who were serving at the outbreak of war. "D" Company (left) and a platoon of "B" Company got to the enemy's outposts lying in front of the wire. The latter was, however, undamaged, and the hostile machine guns, which were estimated to number over a score, opened up with intensity. There was only one gap in the wire, through which the left platoon of "B" Company attempted to rush, but suffered heavily, as they were covered by a machine gun. On the right flank the right platoon of "B" also suffered severely from machine gun fire and, later, with the remnants of the left platoons, was compelled to withdraw to the original line. "D" Company had maintained themselves in the position they had secured, but they were later ordered to withdraw to high ground in the rear and dig in, having advanced on the left to a depth of from 100 to 400 yards. 2nd Lieut. D. W. Wiley and 13 other ranks were killed and one officer and 47 other ranks wounded, in addition to half a dozen missing.

THE ADVENTURES OF A PRIVATE.

The adventures of a member of "D" Company, narrated by himself, afford an idea of what the front line companies went through that day: "We had orders to go over from a wooded cover to make an attack under a smoke barrage at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We had no sooner started than our barrage guns were put out of action, but still we went on. 'D' Company reached the objective, but, owing to barbed wire, we were forced to drop back about 50 yards from the machine gunners into a trench for safety. Finding we were alone, Lieut. Venus sent back for reinforcements and about twenty men from "A" Company were sent out to us. The sergeant in charge told us that all had retired on our left and right, and Lieut. Venus despatched a runner to know whether we were to hold on or retire. After about three hours no message came through, so Lieut. Venus asked me if I would go back with a verbal message to know what was to be done. Off I trotted, with a youngster of 'A' Company, across No Man's Land to the wood that we had left the previous afternoon. We had only gone about 100 yards when I noticed a patrol of about six men. I told this youngster to drop and down we went. The patrol passed right close to us, but we dare not move, as I did not know whether they were friend or foe. After turning my head and watching them away to a safe distance, I made a right incline and then a left, to fetch us back to the place I wanted. When I reached the edge of the

wood I ran into the runner and the other man who had been sent back about three hours previously. They had lost their way. While I was talking to them I felt a sting in my right elbow as though someone had knocked me on my funny-bone. I turned round and asked them what they were doing, when one of them said, 'What is the matter with your arm?' Blood was streaming down. I had a hole right through my tunic and cardigan and my elbow was wounded by a bullet. I plodded on and found the captain and asked him what was to be done. He said the Company was to return. Although wounded, off I went back across No Man's Land. It was just breaking day. Just as I was nearing the trench where our men were I noticed the Boche had a machine gun trained at the end of the trench right on to our men, who were quite unaware of what was happening, as I was higher up than they were, so I up with my rifle and let go and put them on the alert, for up they got and let go with their rifles at the Boche and I fell into the trench exhausted with loss of blood and pain from my wound. I delivered the message. Being daylight, we were unable to retire until dusk had set in, so we made ourselves as comfortable as we could, smoking and chatting, as we had no rations, only our emergency rations (which always seemed to be my share when we were in action), until about 4 o'clock on the 18th (a lucky number), when we all mounted the parapet and rushed back to the wood. We had no sooner reached the wood than up went the trench we had left."

That night "C" and "A" Companies relieved the front line Companies. On October 14th the Battalion went back to huts north of Bohain and was brought back to the line again on the 16th. Vaux Andigny was being heavily shelled, but the Battalion got into position with slight casualties. At 5.40 the Battalion attacked with "A" and "C" Companies, "D" in support and "B" in reserve. They captured the trench west of Belle Vue by cutting through the wire, but then direction was lost somewhat owing to the heavy mist. When this cleared, "C" Company located itself and proceeded to Les Gobelets. "A" Company headquarters had been annihilated by a shell in the vicinity of Belle Vue, Captain H. V. Corbett and the A/C.S.M. both being killed. In the mist the platoon commanders had no information of this fatality and, consequently, the advance lacked cohesion. Ultimately Lieut. J. C. H. Willett, O.C. "D" Company, took charge and the Company reached their objective. The enemy defensive system was of great depth and sited for a large number of machine guns. The opinion of the Essex was that the mist prevented heavier casualties being sustained. The losses, in addition to Captain Corbett, were 15 other ranks killed, one officer and 40 other ranks wounded, which, with the missing, made a total of 73. The captures were considerable, including five officers and 110 other ranks, two 77m. guns, three medium trench mortars and 33

light and heavy machine guns. One hundred prisoners were captured in Regnicourt and handed over to the 46th Division.

BATTALION'S LAST BATTLE.

The next day the 1st Division secured Andigny-les-Fermes and advanced again on October 18th as far as Wassigny. The Essex were relieved and went into Brigade reserve at Vaux Andigny, then to Bohain and afterwards to St. Souplet. A humorous incident of this period was related by Major Saunders. "An old woman carrying a bag wandered into our headquarters during the afternoon. She looked around sheepishly, but said nothing. Her silence, however, was more eloquent than speech. There isn't a great surplus of rations in open warfare, but we could not resist her obvious silent appeal. We offered her a tin of bully and a tin of pork and beans, which were more than joyously received. She then became more loquacious and asked for some bread. At the sight of a half loaf of our white bread she went into rhapsodies, kissed the bread and almost hugged the cook! Later she departed—and, as we heard later—made her way to another battalion headquarters in the town!" On October 21st the company commanders reconnoitred assembly positions north-east of Arbre Guernon, for the 18th Brigade was to take part in its last attack on the 23rd. This time the D.L.I. and West Yorkshires led, the Essex being in reserve, with headquarters at Advantage Farm, and the leading companies, "B" and "D," in the vicinity of La Jonquiere Farm. Later in the day "A" and "D" were placed at the disposal of the Cornwalls and West Yorkshires. The Battalion headquarters moved to Le Quennelet Grange, near Basuel, on October 26th, with "A" and "C" Companies in the area around La Roux Farm. Two days later the Essex went to billets in St. Souplet and sustained their last casualties by an unlucky "heavy," which fell into the signallers' billet, killing one and wounding six others. The Battalion marched to Becquigny on October 29th and then to Fresnoy-le-Grand, which was reached next day. On November 4th it was held in two hours' readiness to proceed to the support of the 46th Division and next day, via Bohain, went to Becquigny, where it was billeted on November 11th, when the Armistice was signed. This is the record in the Battalion diary for that momentous day: "New draft received. Baths at Busigny. Lewis gun training. 'A' Company fired on range." Next day the Brigadier-General inspected the Battalion and presented gallantry cards. There was a march past in column of platoons.

The war was over for the 11th Essex and this, perhaps, is an appropriate place to record the testimony of an officer to the pluck and endurance of the stretcher-bearers.

"The Battalion," he writes, "was always well served by its stretcher-bearers, generally men of good intelligence and a keen sense of the responsibility of their job. By Battalion stretcher-

bearers, I mean particularly those men of the Battalion detailed for this duty. They worked in the fighting line forward of Battalion headquarters. When there were no casualties the stretcher-bearers had a fairly easy time, but they had to be ready to turn out day or night. The carrying of the wounded was in itself a terrible task—generally along trenches or over rough ground—and nearly always in the dark. It was bad enough carrying a bundle of sandbags—which could be set down anywhere—but with a man it was different and rests had to be infrequent. The stretcher-bearer dare not fall and even a bad stumble might be fatal to the wounded. Stretcher-bearing under these conditions entailed the severest possible muscle and nerve strain.

THE MARCH TO THE RHINE.

The final phase of the fighting was undertaken by the 1st and 32nd Divisions of the IX Corps, which by November 11th had forced the Sambre Canal at Catillon and Oisy and then had advanced towards Avesnes, whilst a force, under Major-General Bethell, was pushing the Germans over the Belgian frontier near Beaumont. Thereafter the IX Corps was transferred to the Second Army as part of the British Army of Occupation in Germany, which was to be commanded by Lord Plumer. The commander of the Fourth Army (Lord Rawlinson) expressed his warm thanks for the assistance rendered by the 6th Division, referring especially to its gallantry in the fighting between Holnon Wood and the Canal and at Bohain and Vaux Andigny, where the determination of all ranks filled him with admiration. In the Soire la Chateau and Sars Poteries area the Division was organized into three infantry brigade groups and a divisional troops group.

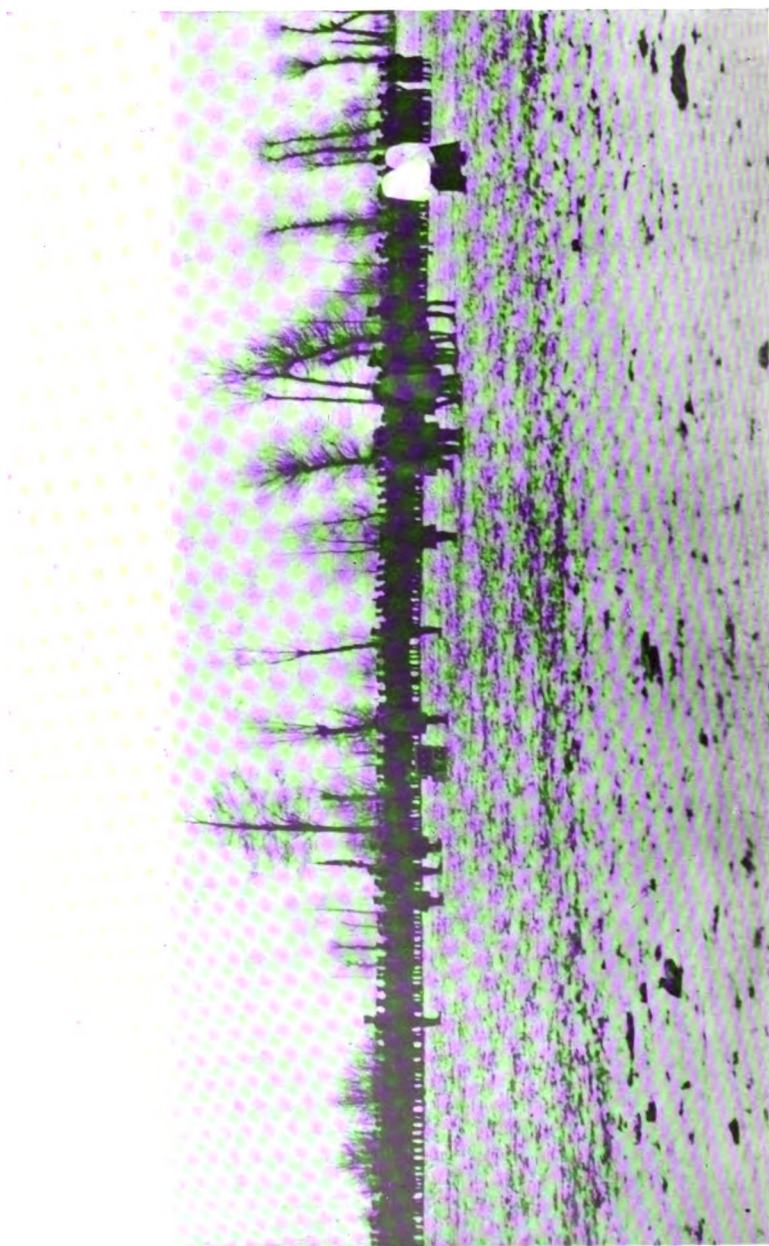
Then came the advance to the Rhine. The march resembled the progression of a snake, the rear group moving forward at each advance to the area occupied the previous day by the leading group. Commencing officially on the 20th November, there were long halts up to 2nd December, owing to the difficulties of feeding the leading divisions (cavalry and infantry), caused by the destruction done by the Germans to the railways, and also owing to the withdrawal of the Germans not being carried out in accordance with programme. Sometimes groups did not move, or only made minor adjustments to obtain more comfortable quarters. Both branches of the staff had long days of reconnaissance in cars ahead of a division, made to avoid moving troops farther off the main roads than was necessary, while the R.E. and Pioneers were often pushed ahead to look after water supplies and mend roads. Right up to the Belgian frontier roads had been cratered and bridges blown down, and these caused defiles and impeded the march. Once across the frontier the roads were splendid, the inhabitants most hospitable and enthusiastic, and the advance only held up until it could

be pushed through continuously. However, it was no hardship to be delayed in such charming surroundings, though the weather was for the most part vile. The march from the neighbourhood of Dinant across the Ardennes and along the lovely valley of the River Ambleve will always stand out as a most delightful reminiscence. All ranks worked hard at their equipment and the transport was so smart as to be thought by the Belgians to be new. It was a proud and splendid Division which marched, with drums beating and colours flying, across the German frontier into the little town of Malmedy between 13th and 16th December. Marching generally by only one road, the length of the Division, when billeted, varied from ten to twenty-five miles. It was particularly interesting for Brigades to occupy the German huts at Elsenhorn Camp of Exercise, where large numbers of the enemy had assembled in the end of July, 1914, for the conquest of Belgium." The troops had a warm welcome from the French-speaking inhabitants of Malmedy and then marched through Montjoie to the occupation area allotted to the Division south-west of Cologne. The divisional headquarters were at Bruhl, whilst the 18th Brigade headquarters were at Lechenich. These were occupied on Christmas Eve, so that Christmas Day was spent upon the Rhine. There were few football grounds, but the troops were astonished to find electric light in the smallest cottages, with "one concert room, with a stage properly fitted up, in even the smallest village." Demobilization proceeded apace and then, on March 15th, the war service of the 6th Division came to an end.

Now for the story of the last days of the Battalion. On November 14th the 11th Essex proceeded by route march to Molain, then the next day to Catillon, and on the 16th to Marbaix, via Landrecies. After a couple of days' rest orders came on the 19th for Sars Poteries, billets being occupied in Leugnies on November 20th. Here they were well received. Two officers who were billeted in the house of the curé were pleased to find excellent beds at their disposal and the old gentleman boasted that he had kept the linen hidden during the German occupation. Part of the work there was clearing mud from the Grandied-Beaumont road. Refitting was a lengthy and by no means easy task. "We have been having a period of refitting during the last few days," wrote an Essex officer. "The men were paraded and we inspected them to see what clothing, etc., they required. This was indented for some time ago, and yesterday I went with my platoon to the quartermaster's stores. It was amusing and pathetic to see the men getting new clothing. What a rude shock war gives to our vanities! A great trouble is that the men will persist in cutting down their trousers to make them neater under the puttees. This is forbidden, and, when discovered, brings down grave censure from the Q.M. Then they are not above aggravating a torn or worn place in order to make the exchange for a new garment more



LIEUT.-COL. C. H. DUMBELL at FRIESHEIM.



Presentation of King's Colour at Friesheim.

probable. I was interested in the issuing of caps, which will illustrate the general run of things. Having 200 to 300 to issue, the Q.M. can't stop to give much time to personal wishes. 'Come along, now. Next man—what size?' '7½, sir.' 'None left, take a 7; you're not in Bond Street now, and it will soon stretch,' he says to an ex-farm labourer, who looks as though he wonders what part of Essex Bond Street is in. 'Come along the next—what size did you say?' '6½!' Got none; take a 7; first shower of rain will shrink it.' And so it goes on."

On November 24th the Battalion commenced the long trek to the Rhine by marching to billets in the Fontenelle area, where ceremonial drill was practised, with football and cross-country running as recreations. In the Brigade run Sergeant Racher, of the 11th Essex, was first home. Thenceforward the time table of the Battalion was: December 2nd, Floronnes; December 3rd, Ostende and Serville; December 5th, Onhaye; December 6th, Braibaut; December 8th, Achet; December 9th, Armelot; December 11th, Comblain Frion; December 13th, Aywaille; December 14th, La Gleize, then on December 15th, when marching via Meuville and Francorchamps, the German frontier was crossed to Burneville. The Battalion entered Malmhon with fixed bayonets and sloped arms. On December 16th the Essex slept at Elsenhorn Camp, then on the 19th at Kalterherberg and on December 20th at Dreiborn. Mechernich was reached on December 21st, then Satzvey, where Battalion headquarters were billeted in the schloss of Count Metternich and enjoyed such comforts as fires in the bedrooms and electrically toasted bread at breakfast. Finally, on December 28rd, to Friesheim, where Christmas Day was spent. There was a church parade in the village theatre at 11 a.m., followed by dinner at 1 p.m. A draft of four officers and 142 other ranks arrived in the evening.

At Freisheim, with the co-operation of the Burgomeister (an ex-major of German Artillery), the Battalion was soon comfortably established, the officers and a good proportion of N.C.O.'s and men having beds. Most of the accommodation was given willingly and there were only two or three instances of obstruction and ill-will. The inhabitants seemed grateful that the troops were more reasonable in their demands than their own would have been even with their own nationals. There were many cases of real kindness towards men who were unwell. Quite a number of the people spoke English. One man was billeted with a tailor and his wife, and the latter, having been a cook at Hampstead, had a fairly extensive acquaintance with London.

Headquarters were situated in a large moated schloss on the outskirts. The daughters of the house were very friendly, particularly at the festive season. The C.O. evidently considered that there was too much fraternising, for on 4th January, 1919, he removed with his headquarters to the other end of the village, taking over the major portion of a large house occupied by a young

couple who kept strictly to their private apartments. It was there that certain of the headquarters officers planned to do themselves well. Having procured at great trouble and some expense the necessary ingredients, they composed what was said to be a really splendid cocktail. This, in a bowl, was handed over to the mess servants to be put in a cool place over-night in readiness for the next evening. Imagine their dismay to find on subsequent enquiry that the "cool place" chosen was a doorstep or window ledge adjacent to the cesspool, and that a film of manure dust lay upon the surface of the precious tippie. From Friesheim excursions were made into Cologne and other places of interest on the river-side, not a few members of the Battalion taking the opportunity of standing on one of the bridges to bring to fulfilment the recruiting song, "When we wind up the Watch on the Rhine," and thinking that it was indeed "Potsdam fine" that the war was over.

Billeting experience in Germany was novel and varied. "After doing it for the Battalion for about two years in France and Belgium because I had some knowledge of the 'lingo,'" wrote Lieut. Gordon Murray, "I suppose it was natural that I should have to continue, although all the German I knew was five or six words. The billeting business was very interesting, because it was so different; sometimes easy, sometimes difficult. There were times when we went to a village which was under control of a capable town major, who would hand over a list of billets, with the accommodation of each, and send an orderly to show us round. But more often I would be told such-and-such a village with houses and barns was available, and had to search out the accommodation for 80 officers and 1,000 men and allocate it to them. The officers individually and the men by companies, together with places for Battalion orderly room, Quartermaster's stores and transport lines, etc. Sometimes all this had to be done by going two hours ahead of the Battalion with the Company Quartermaster Sergeants. An added difficulty was when the area was widely spread and there was no time to find out how much accommodation was available before proceeding to allocate it."

On February 1st Lord Plumer presented colours to the Battalion, which are now laid up in the Essex Regiment Chapel at Warley. A fortnight later the Old Comrades' Association was formed, with Brig.-General C. J. Hobkirk as President and Captain F. H. Wise, M.C., T.D., as Hon. Secretary. This Association meets in London annually about the middle of November. Men who had signed for a further period of service were given a great farewell later in the month, when the whole population turned out to see them off. The last great Brigade event of the occupation period was the sports meeting, which was held on March 10th, 1919, when the 11th Essex obtained 80 points, 2nd D.L.I. 29 points and the 1st West Yorkshires six points. The remainder of the Battalion moved to Herrig, where further parties of men were sent to England upon demobilization.



Battalion Concert Party at Friesheim.



BATTALION OFFICERS AND AMERICAN M.O. AT FRIESHEIM.

*Front Row : Capt. F. S. Pinney, Lieut. J. Earl, Capt. Rotunda (U.S.M.S.), Lieut. A. X. Farmer, Capt. F. A. Coward, M.C., Lieut. F. C. Clarke.
 Second Row : Lieut. H. T. Venus, Major H. S. Roberts, M.C., Major A. G. Saunders, Lieut.-Col. C. H. Dumbell, D.S.O., Lieut. T. G. Murray,
 Capt. F. H. Wise, M.C., T.D., Lieut. Watkins.
 Third Row : Lieut. J. H. Claydon, M.C., Lieut. A. C. Davies, M.C., Lieut. E. H. Dorn, Lieut. Spicer,
 Lieut. Mernagh, Lieut. W. H. Hawkins.*

Later on the unit was transferred to Bruhl, with Lieut.-Colonel Dumbell in command. The former commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel Spring, was also there in command of a Young Soldiers' Battalion. Lieut.-Colonel Dumbell left to take over a similar appointment and Captain F. H. Wise, M.C., commanded the nucleus of the 11th Essex then remaining.

The Battalion found life going on outwardly much as usual in Bruhl. Tramways, with male drivers, but women conductors—the latter in a neat blue uniform—were running; the town was well lighted at night. Two cinemas gave continuous performances from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. The shops were well stocked and the prices compared favourably with those in Belgium. Most of the windows were gay with Christmas decorations. There was a shortage of some varieties of food, but of most foodstuffs there appeared to be sufficient to meet the demand. Several "substitutes" for coffee, tea and oatmeal were offered for sale at high prices, but a dinner at a restaurant, one officer found, was not unduly expensive. Thick soup was 8d., roast beef and two vegetables 8s. 9d., red currant tart 1s. 3d. and half-pint of Munich lager 10d. The bread was eatable, but very dark and not particularly palatable. The butter reminded some of axle grease and was really not nice, whilst the beer was tasteless and, according to one authority, all "arms and legs." No milk, mustard or pepper was to be obtained. "No animosity," wrote an officer, "is shown by the inhabitants; on the contrary, they would be friendly if encouraged. They take considerable interest in us, and men raise their hats to officers. Some go out of their way to do so and, at the same time, wish them *Guten Tag* with a smile. If any of them—especially children—can say 'Good morning' they don't lose an opportunity of showing their knowledge. Children sometimes run up and take us by the hand."

HOME AGAIN.

Orders came for England and on Friday, May 30th, 1919, the cadre arrived at Tilbury on the "Arbroath" from Antwerp. The strength was three officers, one warrant officer and 34 N.C.O.'s and men. The officers were Captain F. H. Wise, M.C., Captain and Adjutant G. H. Scott and Captain and Quartermaster H. S. Roberts, M.C., with R.Q.M.S. W. Basey. The vehicles and stores were on the "Huntslyde," and as this vessel had not reported, the party was accommodated at Purfleet Camp for the night. Early next morning the stores were unloaded and despatched by train, with the cadre, to Aldershot, where the band of the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers played them to Mandora Barracks. The formalities were completed by Thursday—vehicles and mobilization stores being handed over to the Ordnance Officer in four hours—and the cadre left Aldershot on the same day for demobilization at Warley, where the colours had been, in the meantime, deposited by Captain Scott.

13th Bn. The Essex Regiment

FOREWORD.

“**A**N attack in force between the Canal du Nord and Mœuvres broke into our foremost positions and isolated a company of the 13th Battalion The Essex Regiment in a trench just west of the Canal. After maintaining a splendid and successful resistance throughout the day, whereby the pressure upon our main line was greatly relieved, at 4 p.m. this Company held a council of war, at which the two remaining company officers, the company sergeant-major and the platoon sergeants were present, and unanimously determined to fight to the last and have ‘no surrender.’ Two runners who were sent to notify this decision to Battalion Headquarters succeeded in getting through to our lines and delivered their message. During the remainder of the afternoon and far into the following night this gallant company were heard fighting, and there is little room for doubt that they carried out to a man their heroic resolution.”

Extract from “Sir Douglas Haig’s Despatches : The Cambrai Operations.”

13th Battalion The Essex Regiment.

“THE HAMMERS.”

THE 13th Battalion The Essex Regiment (“The Hammers”) was formed in West Ham, largely through the instrumentality of the then Mayor (Councillor H. Dyer, J.P.). At a meeting of the West Ham Town Council on December 8th, 1914, it was notified that the War Office had agreed to the raising of a Service Battalion provided that the municipality would accept responsibility for any expense incurred beyond the amount allowed. The local authority agreed to the condition and on December 29th formal sanction was given to recruit a Battalion of Kitchener’s Army, of war strength, together with a depot company, a total of 1,350 of all ranks. An orderly room was immediately opened at The Chestnuts, Stratford Broadway, whilst the temporary use of Forest Gate skating rink was secured for drill purposes. By January 12th, 1915, 119 men had enlisted, upon which date West Ham Town Council formed a committee to organize the raising of the Battalion, consisting of the Mayor, Aldermen Littler and Mansfield and Councillors Crow, Brabazon, Husband and Hollins. For the time being the men were billeted in their own homes in preference to occupying huts in Wanstead Park. Recruiting was brisk and on January 23rd over 300 men had joined, upon which date the following advertisement appeared in *The Stratford Express*: “County Borough of West Ham. 13th (Service) Battalion Essex Regiment (West Ham): No Gas Bag Invasion can alarm us. True manhood will win. Join your friends in the West Ham Battalion who have already enlisted (names follow). Men resident in the Borough are being billeted at home. Allowance 2s. per day; immediate equipment.—HENRY DYER, Mayor.” Lieut.-Colonel P. R. Papillon, Royal Sussex Regiment, a well-known county cricketer, was gazetted to the command, with Captain R. A. Swan as adjutant. A parade was held at St. Luke’s Church, West Ham, on February 7th. Early in March about 1,100 men had enlisted and a Battalion fund was publicly subscribed amounting to £300. By the end of the month the unit was practically complete, the response having been so enthusiastic that the formation of a second battalion was in contemplation. The Battalion, 1,300 strong, was inspected by G.O.C. Eastern Command (Major-General C. L. Woollcombe, C.B.) on Wanstead Flats on March 23rd. A drumhead service was held at the same place on Sunday, May 16th, when there were also present the 163rd (West Ham) Brigade, R.F.A., over 2,000 men being on parade. The Bishop of Barking

conducted the service, the lesson was read by the Mayor of West Ham and the hymns were accompanied by the bands of the East Anglian Artillery Brigade and of the Thames Ironworks. Amid scenes of much enthusiasm and popular interest, the Battalion left Stratford on May 19th and marched to Brentwood, being accompanied part of the way by the Mayor and numbers of relatives and friends. Lieut.-Colonel Papillon afterwards wrote thanking all concerned for the unfailing kindness and courtesy extended to the Battalion by the Borough of West Ham and particularly by the Mayor, who had been not merely a friend, but a father. At Brentwood the men were placed in billets, whilst company training took place in Weald and Thorndon Parks, where the first casualty occurred, 2nd Lieut. Buxton, assistant manager of the Stratford Empire, being thrown from his horse and fracturing the base of his skull. The Battalion was gradually hardened to war service and when it entrained for Clipstone, Notts., on August 1st, it was at full strength and in fine physical condition. The 33rd Division was being formed in this area, under Major-General Sir F. Stanley Maude, and the 13th Essex joined the 100th Brigade, of which the other units were 16th Middlesex, 17th Middlesex and 16th K.R.R. On August 18th the Division was transferred to Perham Down Camp, Salisbury Plain, where it underwent further training and there received orders for France. The residue of the Battalion was left behind as part of the 14th Essex.

On November 16th, 1915, the transport and advance party (Captain S. E. Collier, Lieuts. R. S. Biddulph-Pinchard and G. Simpson and 2nd Lieut. G. H. T. Ross, with 124 other ranks) entrained at Ludgershall Station for Southampton, taking boat from thence for Havre. Next day the Battalion, which had a total strength of 30 officers and 993 other ranks, left Ludgershall in two parties for Folkestone, which was reached at noon. The officers who embarked were: Lieut.-Colonel P. R. Papillon (in command), Major A. L. Brown (second-in-command); Adjutant, Captain F. J. Trumble; O.C. Signal Section, Lieut. L. C. Holthusen; O.C. M.G. Section, Captain A. G. Hayward; Medical Officer, Lieut. A. W. Holthusen, R.A.M.C.; Chaplain, Rev. T. L. B. Westerdale (Wesleyan Methodist); Quartermaster, Lieut. T. E. Brind; "A" Company—Captain R. A. Swan, 2nd Lieuts. A. E. Bunting, F. T. Folnard and A. W. Lee; "B" Company—Major W. H. Winthrop, Lieut. C. G. Carson, 2nd Lieuts. R. G. Norman and F. R. Keeble; "C" Company—Captain J. W. Paterson, Lieut. N. Lang, 2nd Lieuts. C. L. B. Lyne, P. G. Fountain and B. R. Page; "D" Company—Captain H. Cardinal-Harford, Lieuts. W. W. Basley and R. T. Howell, 2nd Lieuts. W. Hitch and H. Sharman. Among the warrant officers was C.S.M. Cattermole, "D" Company, an old Navy man, who subsequently became R.S.M. and won the M.C.

The Battalion embarked upon the "Princess Victoria" at

Folkestone Harbour, but passage was delayed by the sinking of the hospital ship, "Anglia." She was blown up by a mine and the catastrophe was witnessed by all on board. Boulogne was reached at 6 p.m., and the Battalion spent a cold, frosty night under canvas at Ostrohave Rest Camp. There it remained until November 19th, when it left for Pont de Briques station and was joined by the advance party. From Thiennes station the 18th Essex entrained for St. Omer and then went into billets at Boeseghein. Another move was made on November 25th to La Pierriere, following which the Battalion marched to Bethune on December 2nd and was billeted in a tobacco factory. The next day Essars was reached and there gunfire was heard for the first time. On December 7th the Battalion was transferred to the 5th Brigade, 2nd Division, for trench instruction. "B" and "C" Companies had the first taste of active service conditions, for they went into the line in the vicinity of St. Preol on December 10th, being relieved the next day by the other two Companies. The first casualty was sustained, when Private P. R. Price, "B" Company, was killed. The Battalion marched to Bethune on December 22nd and was there transferred to 6th Brigade, 2nd Division (Major-General Landon), then part of the I Corps of the First Army.¹ The last days of the old year were spent at Manqueville.

EARLY SERVICE IN FRANCE.

By way of Berguette and Bethune the Battalion reached Les Chaquaux on January 16th, 1916, and two days later headquarters and two companies occupied the reserve trenches near the brickworks at Givenchy, immediately north of the La Basse Canal, with two companies of the Hertfordshires, under Lieut.-Colonel Papillon. Heavy shelling wounded four other ranks on January 20th, the day on which the composite Battalion relieved the South Staffordshires in the front and second line trenches, when hostile gunfire killed one man and wounded six others. An enemy mine was blown up on January 22nd, but the Essex luckily sustained no casualty. The next day Colonel Papillon led out his command upon relief by two companies of the Hertfordshires and two companies of the Essex,

1. The 2nd Division was one of the most famous of the divisions of the "Old Contemptibles." It held the line at Mons and was subsequently in the thick of the fighting at Landrecies, Marne, Aisne, Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert and Loos. It was in the First Battle of Ypres that the 2nd Worcesters, of the 2nd Division, made their celebrated charge at Gheluvelt and restored the line. Upon reorganization in November, 1915, the Worcesters were transferred, together with the 1st Queen's, to the 33rd Division. The 19th Brigade also became part of the 33rd Division, and in return the 99th Brigade (17th, 22nd, 23rd and 24th Royal Fusiliers) was sent to the 2nd Division. Considerable interchange of battalions between brigades also occurred, as a result of which the 6th Brigade, 2nd Division, (Brig.-General A. C. Daly), on December 15th, 1915, comprised 1st King's, 2nd South Staffords, 17th Middlesex, 13th Essex and 1st Herts. The last-named left the Division for general headquarters on February 24th, 1916, and the Brigade resumed the normal four battalion establishment.

under Sir Henry Page Croft, and went to billets at Gorre. They returned to the trenches vacated by the 1st King's on January 27th and faced without flinching the terrific bombardment on the Kaiser's birthday (January 28th), which lasted for seven and a quarter hours. Slight damage was done to buildings in the vicinity of Windy Corner, including the regimental aid post. Nine other ranks were wounded. The Essex and Herts. were back in Gorre at the end of the month and saw their comrades take over the Givenchy front line. When this tour was completed the Battalion reunited and occupied on February 11th the Village line at Festubert, being transferred to another section on February 15th. There, after suffering the loss of two killed and four wounded, the 18th Essex were succeeded by the 11th South Wales Borderers and went back to billets in Les Chocquaux. During the march a halt was made and hot soup was served out. It was a bright, moonlit night and excitement was caused by the appearance of a hostile airship, which dropped bombs in the vicinity of the billets. After a brief stay at Les Harisaires and Mont Bermenchon, the Battalion marched thirteen miles on February 25th to Petit Sains, in the Lens area, where billets were taken over from the French. It was the first of the moves which were taken southward when the British area of responsibility was extended. The road was frozen and heavy snow fell at intervals. The men, and particularly the horses, had great difficulty in getting along, and much delay occurred whilst the animals were "roughed" with the kindly aid of an artillery unit encountered on the way. The Battalion marched on February 26th to billets at Bully Grenay, for the Division had joined I Corps and had moved to the Augres, Calonne and Souches sectors, to the south of Loos. They took over from the 18th (French) Division, their opponents being the 17th Reserve Division of the IX Reserve Corps. On March 5th the 1st King's were relieved in the support area facing Lens and there a tragedy took place which cast a gloom over the Battalion. The night of March 5th-6th was very cold, with falling snow, though there was no wind. A party consisting of Lance-Corporal E. Ryan and Privates W. E. Loynes, E. J. Barber, J. A. Carter, A. Busby, G. A. Parker, H. J. Chaplin and E. A. Payne, all of "C" Company, occupied a cellar, having a coke brazier in the open doorway. In the morning all of them were found dead, with the exception of Private Payne, who had slept nearest to the open doorway, and he died twenty-four hours later, notwithstanding the utmost efforts made to save him. The Battalion was in and out of the trenches in the Bully-Grenay sector until the end of March, when Colonel Papillon took over temporary command of the Brigade, Major W. H. Winthrop succeeding him in the 18th Essex.

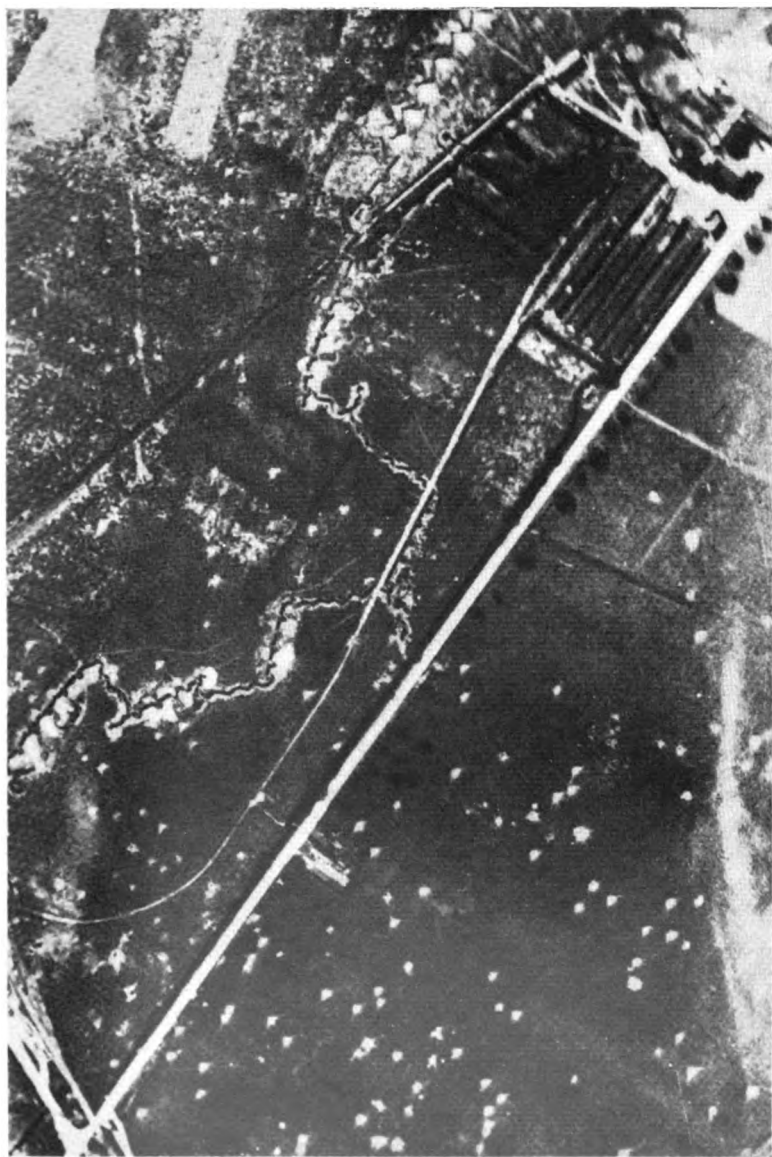
Early in April Colonel Papillon resumed command of the Battalion, which was then at Coupigny. It went by easy stages

to Delettes. Training was undertaken from April 14th-16th, at Gruppe and Rupigny, after which the 18th Essex returned to Bruay on April 17th, and next night relieved the 12th Durham L.I. in and around the village of Cité Calonne, facing Lens and Lievin. After a short spell in the support area, the Battalion was again in the line on April 23rd, where, on April 27th, several casualties occurred. A heavy bombardment broke out on the right in the early morning mist, which suddenly lifted. A sniper killed 2nd Lieut. Alfred Oscar Ollett, whilst Private J. Cooper died from the effects of a trench mortar shell, two N.C.O.'s being wounded. The Battalion had its first experience of chlorine gas on April 29th, the attack lasting from 5 a.m. to 6.10 a.m. It was followed by a harmless gas shell bombardment on "B" Company's lines. The Essex must have been almost the first to encounter this form of gunfire, which subsequently became a customary feature on both sides. On the last day of April the 18th Battalion occupied billets in Bully Grenay on relief by the 17th Middlesex. From May 4th until the 21st the Battalion was in and out of the Calonne sector, suffering several casualties from shelling, including four killed. The Essex were at Divion for a divisional rest, when, on May 22nd, they were hurriedly taken by motor lorries to Maisnil Bouche. The Germans had captured part of the front and support lines by a surprise gas attack and large numbers of troops were concentrated towards Carency. The 99th Brigade was put in to retrieve the position, but it was stopped after suffering a good deal of loss. The Battalion relieved units of the 47th Division at Vimy Ridge, after some delay due to shelling of the road and the heavy rainfall. Minnenwerfers were active—the first time that Essex had become acquainted with them—but they were silenced by the British artillery. Several casualties ensued from shellfire until the Battalion went out of the front line into support on May 30th. "B" Company and three platoons of "A" Company were at Carency, "C" Company at Zouave Valley, south of Uhlan Valley, "D" Company at Zouave Valley, north of Uhlan Valley, and the remaining platoon of "A" Company at Bajolle Line, north of Cabaret Road. The sappers and Lewis Gun Section were at Carency. On June 1st three mines were exploded opposite Souchez, and the 1st King's and 17th Middlesex fought stoutly when sent forward to seize and hold the craters. "C" Company, of the Essex, were the carrying party and assisted in consolidating the position. "D" Company were sent to the support of the 1st King's when they reached the German trenches and the C.O. subsequently expressed cordial thanks for their assistance. The enemy artillery was very active and trenches in front of battalion headquarters were severely damaged. There were over a score of casualties, including two killed. Nearly 90 wounded of three regiments passed through the regimental aid post during the night and

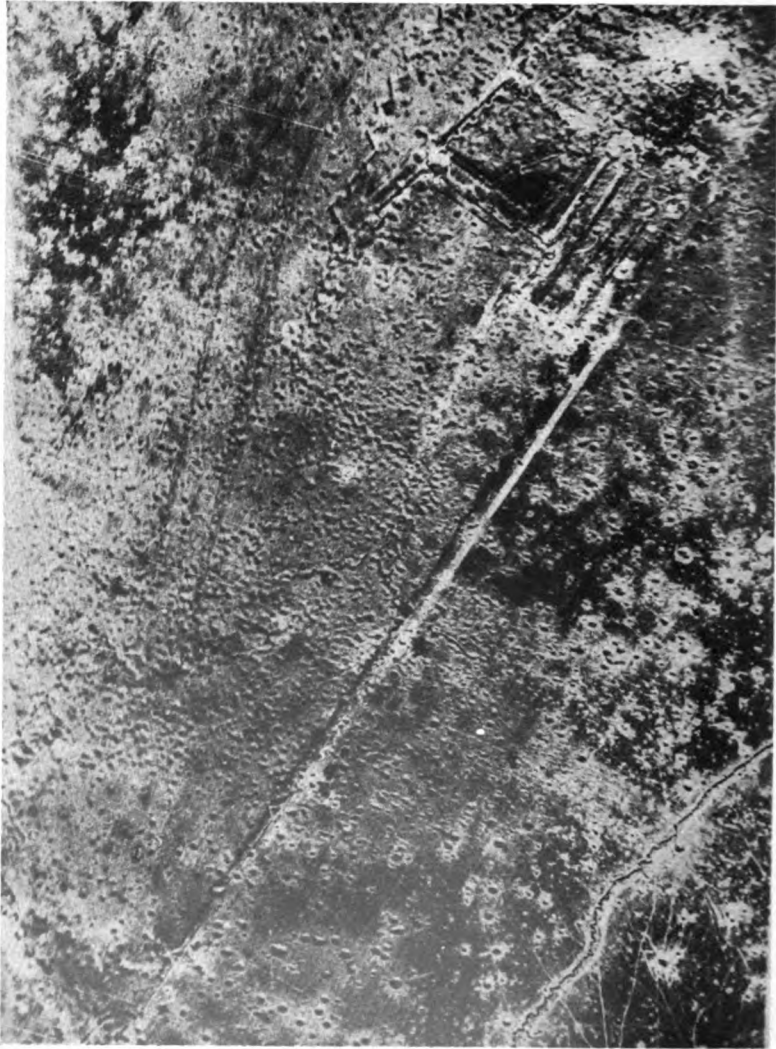
had to remain there because of the barrage on Zouave Valley. The M.O., Captain Holthusen, successfully evacuated them during a lull between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m. The early part of June was spent in and about Carency and on June 18th the Battalion was transferred to Berthouval, where a raiding party of 62, under Captain A. G. Hayward, Lieut. F. R. Keeble and Lieut. W. W. Busby, proceeded to Chateau de la Haie to be trained for the operation. They were subsequently joined by A.R.S.M. G. E. Cattermole and 25 other ranks. An unfortunate bombing accident occurred whilst the raiding party were in training, which killed Private A. C. Giles and four other ranks.

A SUCCESSFUL RAID.

The raid was directed against the strong point at the junction of Vincent Street with the German front line and was carried out on the night of July 1st-2nd, with Captain Hayward in command. The whole party, of three officers and 100 other ranks, including the acting R.S.M., crawled out into No Man's Land and were in position, within 60 or 70 yards of the objective, by 12.30 a.m. Nine minutes later a box barrage of artillery and trench mortars was opened. They also fired on suspected machine gun emplacements, minnenwerfer positions and rear communication trenches, certain points receiving close attention throughout the period of the raid. For a minute, too, the Stokes mortars plastered the objective and then a dash was made in four parties for the enemy's trenches, which were entered with only one casualty. The strong point was found to be full of Germans, some ten or a dozen of whom had been already killed by fire from the Stokes guns. Fierce fighting ensued. A party on the left, told off to deal with the sap in Vincent Street, found it unoccupied, also the supposed machine gun emplacement to the north of it, which they discovered to be a mine shaft. A few Germans were encountered by the party, five of whom were killed. The left centre party also came across a number of the enemy, one of whom was killed. Five of them took refuge in a dug-out and were killed there. The right centre party met greater numbers of Germans. Five of them were dealt with in the trench and seven were located in a shallow dug-out, of whom six were killed and one taken prisoner. The garrison of the strong point attempted to escape by a communication trench leading eastward, but they were caught by the right party, who bombed them. A score were killed and a number of others were wounded, whilst a dozen were taken prisoner. The raiding party withdrew after occupying the enemy's trenches for a quarter of an hour and suffered somewhat from heavy shrapnel fire on the return journey. Two officers (Captain A. G. Hayward and Lieut. F. R. Keeble) were wounded, nine other ranks were killed and 40 wounded. The Battalion also lost another by shellfire during the operation. The three



Air photograph showing Waterlot Farm, between Longueval and Guillemont, before bombardment, 1916.
(Imperial War Museum, Crown Copyright).



Air photograph showing Waterlot Farm, between Longueval and Guillemont, after bombardment, 1916.
(Imperial War Museum, Crown Copyright).

officers, with the acting R.S.M., received Military Crosses for their gallantry and six of the other ranks the Military Medal. General G. C. Monro, commanding the First Army, telegraphed his congratulations. This was followed by a letter from Lieut.-General Kidgell, Chief of the General Staff, which ran: "The numerous successful raids carried out along our front during the last few days have been undoubtedly of considerable assistance to the main operations, besides having added appreciably to the enemy's casualties. The Commander-in-Chief desires that his appreciation of the good work done may be conveyed to all who have planned and carried out the raid."

ON THE SOMME.

The 2nd Division (Major-General W. G. Walker, V.C.) next experienced the hard and costly fighting of the First Battles of the Somme. It was not employed in the initial offensive, but before the end of the month it was committed to the desperate struggle for the possession of Delville Wood. The Division was in the Dieval area when, on July 18th, orders came for the Division to join the XIII Corps of the Fourth Army and the 3rd Division was relieved in front of Montauban early on July 25th. The 99th Brigade was in the Delville Wood sector, with the 5th Brigade in the Happy Valley and the 6th Brigade at Bois des Tailles. In conjunction with the 5th Division of the XV Corps, the 99th Brigade of the 2nd Division attacked Delville Wood on July 27th and captured it, earning the hearty congratulations of Army and Corps Commanders. The 2nd South Staffords and 17th Middlesex, of the 6th Brigade, relieved the 99th Brigade and were heavily counter-attacked on the night of July 28th, but stoutly held to the Division's new line. The offensive continued and whilst the 30th Division was, on July 30th, directed against Guillemont, the 5th Brigade of the 2nd Division was to capture the sector lying between Waterlot Farm and Guillemont. The attack was not a success. Meanwhile, the 13th Essex were holding Delville Wood against persistent enemy counter-attacks. The Division suffered the loss of 108 officers and 2,957 other ranks in five days' fighting. On August 1st the Division lay in the following positions: 5th Brigade, Waterlot Farm; 6th Brigade, Delville Wood, and 99th Brigade in reserve in the Montauban area. The next day the 6th Brigade was relieved by the 99th. Fighting went on without intermission.

The XIII Corps was employed in another attempt upon Guillemont on August 8th. The 55th Division was deputed to take the village, with the French XX Corps on its right, whilst the 2nd Division was to capture the section of the line between Waterlot Farm and Guillemont. The 6th Brigade was assigned to the attack, which was made by the 1st King's and 17th Middlesex, with the 2nd South Staffords in close support and

the 18th Essex in brigade reserve in Mine Alley. Some progress was made, but close by Guillemont Station there was bitter fighting, which heavily involved the 1st King's, three of whose companies had reached the second and third objectives. They were cut off by the enemy, who emerged from the underground hiding places with which the village was honeycombed. The 18th Essex made a night attack west of Guillemont Station, but it failed, as also did the effort made by the 55th Division on the right. Having lost over 700 of all ranks in their unsuccessful attempt upon Guillemont, the Division was withdrawn and reached the Ancre area between August 11th and 14th. Guillemont fell early in September. The 2nd Division next came into action on the Somme just south of Hébuterne, which it took over on August 19th from the Guards Division. Divisional headquarters were in Conin. Much work was undertaken in strengthening the position and there was frequent raiding, particularly in the middle of September, when parties from each Brigade were engaged. The Division, less the artillery, was taken out of the line on October 8th to practise an attack which was to be made north of Thiepval, in which tanks were also to be employed. The 5th Brigade was at Lealvillers, the 6th at Puchevillers and the 99th at Rancheval and Arqueves. The Division was back in the line again on October 17th. "The weather at this period was wet, dull, cold and misty, and the roads, trenches and communications were in an appalling state. Day after day the attack was postponed forty-eight hours, until, at the end of the month, it seemed as if the elements would prevent the projected offensive. Heavy rains caused many dug-outs to fall in, whilst the parapets of the trenches were continually tumbling down. Working parties were everywhere engaged in digging and revetting. To add to these difficulties, heavy hostile bombardments frequently blew in the parapets and smashed up communication trenches. Behind the front line trenches many gun pits in the artillery lines were deep in water. In this way October passed." Early November was more favourable from the weather point of view, but "in the 6th Infantry Brigade front line the water in places was waist deep, the average depth knee deep. The ground about the trenches was pockmarked with shell-holes full of water and inches deep in mud; the constant traffic up and down the communication trenches had turned the latter into quagmires. Reliefs took hours to accomplish and sometimes had to be completed in daylight, progress to and from the front lines being painfully slow." A plan embracing a much greater conception had to be abandoned and a more limited operation undertaken against Beaumont Hamel on November 18th. The enemy position had been much strengthened since the British attack thereon had been repulsed on July 1st (in which both the 1st and 2nd Essex took part), particularly the villages of

St. Pierre Divion, Beaucourt-sur-Ancre and Beaumont Hamel. The attack was made by the V Corps, supported by the artillery fire of eight divisions. The infantry detailed were the 3rd, 2nd, 51st and 63rd (Naval) Divisions in that order. There were two phases, the first devoted to the capture of the Violet and Green Lines and the second to the Yellow Line. The 2nd Division had to take a portion of the line from about the centre of Hunter Street, due east of White City, to Board Street, having the 3rd Division on the left, the 51st and 63rd on the right and the 37th in reserve. Two battalions of the 5th Brigade (2nd H.L.I. and 24th Royal Fusiliers) and two of the 6th Brigade (13th Essex and 2nd South Staffords) were to take part in the first phase, the capture of the Green Line, Beaumont Trench. The battalions formed in four waves, the 17th Middlesex supporting the South Staffords and the 1st King's the 13th Essex. In the same way the Highland Light Infantry had the 17th Royal Fusiliers in their rear and the 24th Royal Fusiliers the 2nd Oxford and Bucks L.I. The 99th Brigade was in reserve. Four machine guns went forward with each battalion. The hostile opposition comprised the 95th Regiment (38th Division), 23rd, 62nd and 63rd Regiments (12th Division) and 169th Regiment (52nd Division), each regiment consisting of three battalions. The morning broke with a thick mist. At 5 a.m. the siege batteries had opened in the customary way, but then, all of a sudden, three-quarters of an hour later, the lighter guns joined in and pounded the hostile front line. No Man's Land was a mass of squalid mud, inches thick, with shell-holes and mine craters, filled with slimy water, and it was across this quagmire that the troops moved when the barrage went forward. The South Staffords were in the front line by 6.15 a.m., but confusion followed in the fog. Units got mixed and the attack could not keep pace with the barrage. The wire in the German second line (Violet) was uncut and though, in the mire, the men made the most desperate efforts to move on, the enemy got his machine guns to work in the neighbourhood of Serre and in the end the disappointed Staffords had to retire to the jumping off point. The 13th Essex, who were to attempt the Quadrilateral and the German trenches beyond, met with little better luck. Part of "C" Company got through the second and third German lines and arrived at Green Line, together with a few men of the 1st King's, but the remainder of the Battalion was not so successful, having been held up in front of the enemy wire. This was the farthest point reached by the 6th Brigade and a defensive flank was immediately formed from the junction of the Green Line with Lager Alley. The 5th Brigade was more fortunate, for it was successful in taking half a mile of the trench system north of Beaumont Hamel, capturing nearly 500 prisoners. The attack was a brilliant success, on the whole, for, south of the Ancre, the 19th and 39th Divisions captured St. Pierre Divion, whilst

north of the river the Naval Division entered Beaucourt and the 51st Division made good in Beaumont Hamel. The attack was resumed next day. Beaucourt was finally carried and the 99th Brigade established themselves in the southern portion of the Quadrilateral. The total number of prisoners taken was over 7,000. The 2nd Division was relieved by the 32nd Division during the 16th-17th November, having sustained nearly 3,000 casualties, but securing over one thousand prisoners. At the end of November the Division was transferred to a rest area and was there throughout December. On the 27th of that month Major-General C. E. Peirara, C.B., C.M.G., took over command in succession to Major-General W. G. Walker.

IN DELVILLE WOOD.

Now for the story of the 13th Essex during these fateful months of 1916. On July 17th the Battalion went into billets at Guoy-Serreins and next day marched seven miles to Beugin. Another seven miles' march was undertaken the following day (20th), after which the Essex entrained at Beugas for Longeau, where, after stacking packs, the Battalion went to Welcome Wood, Vaux-en-Somme, a distance of twelve miles. It had been transferred to the XIII Corps, Fourth Army. On July 23rd Bois de Tailles was reached and two days later the Essex were in reserve trenches in the Triangle and were not actively engaged in the fight for Delville Wood. Three days afterwards (July 28th) they moved up to Breslau Support. "B" and "D" Companies were pushed forward that night to support the South Staffords, who were heavily counter-attacked. The latter were holding the northern edge of the Wood, with a defensive flank facing west. The artillery fire was so heavy that portions of the trenches were blown into the air, many men being buried. The regiment held on and beat back the enemy bombers who sought to effect an entrance, assisted therein by the two Essex companies. On July 30th a hostile sniping group was discovered and dispersed by a party of forty men. The enemy also made another attack, which was repulsed without difficulty, notwithstanding that the artillery fired continuously day and night. The Battalion had nine officers wounded, 39 other ranks killed, 138 wounded and 17 missing, whilst twenty suffered from shell-shock and seven wounded remained at duty—a total of 230; a heavy roll when it is remembered that the Battalion had not been engaged in the front line of the attack.

August opened with the Battalion still in Breslau Support. There was continuous hostile shelling on Mine Alley, which found the transport of the 99th M.G.C., killing several and wounding others. At nightfall a move was made to new trenches in reserve some distance back, where the shelling was still intense. On August 5th the Battalion entered the front line at Waterlot Farm, but next day went back to Mine Alley. Whilst there

orders were received to take over the trenches at Trones Wood in order to make a night attack, the earlier effort against Guillemont having failed. Position was taken up at 3.30 a.m. on the night of August 8th-9th, leaving no time for reconnaissance or thorough organization. The four objectives were : (1) The section of the German front line from the deep dug-outs (exclusive) to Brompton Road (exclusive); (2) Guillemont Station; (3) Line of High Holborn to Machine Gun House (exclusive), and (4) the southern portion of Z-Z trench from Brompton Road (exclusive), including forks running due S.E. of railway lines, to S24-B98 inclusive. At 4.10 a.m. "C" Company, under the protection of a barrage, moved up to within forty or fifty yards of the first objective and when it lifted they endeavoured to rush the trench, but found the enemy wire had not been cut. They made desperate endeavours to get through, but were mown down by machine gun fire. After an interval of ten minutes "D" Company followed, but met with a similar check, as a consequence of which orders were given to the two remaining companies to stand fast and assist in getting the wounded to the rear. Brigade headquarters later on confirmed the decision and the attack was not pressed further. The losses were serious in the depleted state of the Battalion. Two officers were killed (2nd Lieut. George Henry Thornton Ross and 2nd Lieut. Bernard Robert Page) and another was wounded, whilst 14 other ranks were killed, 18 were missing and 60 wounded, a total of 90. At 6.30 p.m. next day the Battalion returned to trenches in Mine Alley and the day after went to Happy Valley. Thereafter by way of Meaulte and Saleux, it reached La Chaussee, at which it stayed on August 14th and 15th. The route back to the line was through Vignacourt, Bernaville, Bois de Warnemont (where the G.H.Q. of the Commander-in-Chief at Beauquesne were passed) and Courcelles. A halt was made for dinner at the latter place on August 19th, after which the 1st Irish Guards were relieved in the right sub-section, three other ranks being wounded in the process. The Essex were themselves relieved on August 22nd, but on August 24th were again in the line, this time in the left sub-section of the Serre section. There heavy shelling was experienced, which killed two and wounded four others. On August 28th the Battalion went into billets at Courcelles.

On September 1st the Essex trudged back to the line and three days later had an exciting encounter with a patrol of the 168th Jäger Rifles, consisting of a N.C.O. and eight men. They apparently came over to ascertain the extent of the damage done by the bombardment on the previous day. Immediately they were seen a brisk bombing fight ensued, in the course of which the leader of the German patrol and another were killed and another taken prisoner. The Battalion lost four other ranks killed and six wounded. The next day the unit went into billets in Courcelles, and thereafter was in and out of the line until

September 19th, when it marched to huts and tents in Bois du Warnimont, where the rest of the month was spent in training, particularly in co-operation with aircraft and assault on trenches.

THE ANCRE OFFENSIVE.

Whilst marching to the relief of the 16th Sherwood Foresters in Sailly-au-Bois section on October 1st, the commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel P. R. Papillon, D.S.O., was taken ill and Major W. H. Carter, D.S.O., M.C., 2nd South Staffordshires, who had been attached to the 17th Middlesex, took over command of the Battalion. Whilst upon this tour of duty the Essex constructed a new kicking-off trench in No Man's Land. Upon relief they went to Bertrancourt and then to Puchevillers on October 7th. They were back at Bertrancourt on October 18th and after supplying working parties were sent to Mailly Wood East on October 21st. A spell in the line ensued on October 26th, when enemy shelling killed 2nd Lieut. Sidney William Hunt and Sergeant H. J. Morrison and wounded four others. At the end of the month the Battalion was in Bertrancourt to prepare for the Ancre operation. New billets were occupied in Mailly Maillet on November 7th, and the 18th went into the trenches on November 11th. "A" Company occupied a section from the junction of Buster and Front Line to the junction of Borden Avenue and Front Line, Borden Avenue inclusive. "B" Company were on the left of "A" Company to within 100 yards of North Minor Trench and Front Line. "C" Company held from the junction of Buster and Chatham, along Chatham Line, to Borden Avenue exclusive. "D" Company were from Borden Avenue along Chatham, Wolf and Minor Trenches.

The objective was the Quadrilateral and four lines of German trenches to the south thereof. Nos. 1 and 2 platoons of "A" Company and Nos. 5 and 6 platoons of "B" Company formed the first line, followed by the remaining platoons of the two companies immediately in rear, who were to provide the clearing up parties in the first and second German lines. The lines were to advance at three paces interval between. Each Company had two Lewis guns for use with the clearing up parties. The second wave consisted of a platoon of "C" Company on the right and a platoon of "D" Company on the left, with another platoon from each Company to follow for the purposes of clearing up the third German line. They had two Lewis guns. The third wave comprised a third platoon of "C" Company and another of "D" Company, also with two Lewis guns each on the flanks. The fourth wave consisted of the remaining platoons of "C" and "D" Companies, again with two Lewis guns, each in the immediate rear and centre of platoons. A platoon of "A" Company and a Lewis gun were to form a defensive right flank when the objective was taken, and a platoon of "B" Company and a Lewis gun were to do similar duty on the left.

"D" Company were to supply a platoon as a working party to construct a strong point. Four parties, each of three bombers and two bayonet men, were detailed to block the communication trenches to the Green Line and also right and left of the objective in the event of the battalions on the flank not having reached their allotment. In addition to the usual carrying detachments, two parties, each of five men, were to hold themselves in readiness to carry Bangalore torpedoes behind the second wave. If the first wave were hung up, they were to be called up, in addition to the small parties told off to bomb the German line in the vicinity of the obstacle, to cover the men working with wirecutters and wirebreakers. "If a gap could be made with wirecutters and wirebreakers, the torpedo was not to be placed in position, as use of the torpedo would not only be difficult, but would also cause a certain amount of delay; also troops would have to move away from the vicinity of the obstacle to allow of its being used." O.C. Signals was ordered to follow up behind the fourth wave with enough men to maintain communication with headquarters. He was to lay telephone lines as he moved forward upon wire netting, and, in addition, was to select spots in the second and third German lines for Battalion headquarters and aid posts. All ranks were warned that it was most important for waves to follow up our barrage as closely as possible. They were also instructed that, in the event of the enemy putting up a barrage, they were to rush it and not to hesitate, as the least hesitation would cause a large number of casualties. They were instructed to keep the old proverb in mind, "He who hesitates is lost."

On the night before the attack the Battalion commander had a consultation with the company commanders of the first wave. Colonel Carter was of opinion that it would be impossible to take the Quadrilateral by frontal attack and that it should be entered from the flanks. The company commanders disagreed with this view on the ground that it would be almost impossible to get the men into line again and direction would be lost, and also because the divided force would come under enfilade fire from the north and south of the Quadrilateral. Although still in doubt, Colonel Carter decided to let the orders remain as before and so the attack went forward.

At 2.30 a.m. on November 13th each man was given a cup of hot cocoa and half an hour later the Battalion, cheerful and confident, moved into the open, being in position by 4.15 a.m. This was a quarter of an hour later than had been ordered, because of the difficulty in getting into touch with the battalion on the left. At 5.45 a.m. the barrage opened and simultaneously the waves moved forward, followed by the 1st King's. Immediately the barrage lifted the first wave pushed on to the first trench line and thereafter battalion headquarters got no information other than that which could be gleaned from patrols

sent forward to investigate. The difficulty was intensified by the thick mist, which lasted until the afternoon of the next day. The ground, too, was in very bad condition owing to the constant rain. In places the trenches were waist deep in mud and water, and in all of them the mud was knee deep. In No Man's Land shellholes and barbed wire proved a sore hindrance, whilst beyond the German front line a quagmire had been created by the bombardment of the British guns. 2nd Lieut. Lowings and 2nd Lieut. Sharman, each with two men, were despatched to find out what was happening in front. They could obtain no information as to the right, but on the left men were lying in front of the German wire, whilst a party of about fifty were lined up behind a small bank one hundred yards in front of the wire. They were under heavy machine gun and rifle fire, in face of which advance was impossible. Orders were sent to the party to consolidate and await further instructions. A second officer's patrol later brought back similar tidings. Colonel Carter had previously given orders that, if possible, the machine guns in the Quadrilateral should be rushed, but reports of the condition of the ground showed it to be an impossibility and at 8.45 a.m. he sent orders to stay the attack. The Signalling Officer (2nd Lieut. Paterson) threw more light upon the situation when he returned from the Green Line at 3 p.m. He and 2nd Lieut. Hone, with a party of Essex and King's, numbering about fifty, had passed through the Green Line, with men of the Oxford and Bucks and 22nd Royal Fusiliers. They quickly realized, however, that there were no British troops on the left and that, indeed, they were in considerable peril, for Germans were discovered to be still in position. Nevertheless, these men of stout heart held on to the ground they had won, making a block and constructing a strong point, into which they placed their three Lewis guns. At 4.30 p.m. Colonel Carter had news that the 22nd Royal Fusiliers were to form a defensive flank facing north, but to the south of the Quadrilateral. In order to assist, it was decided to construct a trench from Buster to the small sap in the German front line, 200 yards south of the Quadrilateral, but the officer commanding the 22nd Royal Fusiliers, who was placed in charge of the work, decided that the trench should run from Egg Street to the Quadrilateral. A certain amount of progress was made, but the next night the R.E. officer in charge agreed with Colonel Carter that it would be better to turn half-right and join up with two craters lying south of the south-eastern corner of the Quadrilateral, and this was accordingly done. Next morning the command of the right sub-section was taken over by O.C. 1st King's. 2nd Lieut. Paterson reported later in the morning to Colonel Carter that 2nd Lieut. Hone was still holding on in the Green Line with a party of Essex and King's, at the junction with Lager, under orders of the 24th Royal Fusiliers. Information was received that two

battalions of the 99th Brigade on the 15th were to attack the Quadrilateral from the southern flank, with the assistance of two tanks, and the Essex commander, in conjunction with the 22nd Royal Fusiliers, was ordered to watch events and take advantage of any opportunity that presented itself. Colonel Carter told off two parties to stand by—one of 30 men, under 2nd Lieut. Sharman, which included four bombers, and another under 2nd Lieut. Paterson of 25 men, with a platoon of the King's (Captain Jameson). The last-named officers and three men acted as guides when the tanks moved forward at 6.30 a.m. on November 18th, but the latter were soon put out of action and an attempt to rescue the personnel came to nought. The Essex and King's men occupied the newly-cut trench about 8 a.m., 2nd Lieut. Sharman also having orders to make a barricade and bombing post at the junction with Cat Tunnel. Captain Jameson made the most of his opportunity, for during the morning it was reported that he had bombed his way into the Quadrilateral in conjunction with the Royal Fusiliers, under Major Adams, and was successfully working northwards. 2nd Lieut. Paterson was immediately sent forward with the last available party to support this movement, whilst 2nd Lieut. Sharman was ordered to reinforce Captain Jameson. An officer and fifty men of the 24th Royal Fusiliers were also ordered to Major Adams during the afternoon. What had happened was that between the new communication trench and the south-eastern corner of the Quadrilateral the Germans had established a bombing post. The 22nd Royal Fusiliers had also formed a post in the old German front line, about 30 yards south of its junction with the communication trench, and the 13th Essex had also made another post in the communication trench about 25 yards from its junction with the old German front line. This tended to isolate the Germans and when, during the morning, the tanks also made their appearance, they withdrew northwards, taking with them the machine guns previously at the south-eastern corner of the Quadrilateral. This point was entered and then came Captain Jameson with instructions to bomb up the trenches still held by the enemy and establish a strong point in the northern end. It was a difficult operation, but he accomplished it successfully. The enemy retaliated with heavy shellfire and Captain Jameson skilfully withdrew his men slightly south and established bombing posts and strong points in the centre of the Quadrilateral in such a way that the enemy could not regain foothold in any part. He held on, too, in spite of a fierce bombardment until he was relieved.

It only remains to trace the movements of 2nd Lieut. A. C. Hone and his platoon of "C" Company, which made such a strikingly successful advance on the right in co-operation with the 5th Brigade. Hone and his men formed the right half of the fourth wave. They encountered little opposition, except from stray bombers on the left. The second and third German

lines were crossed and the Green Line was reached a few minutes after the artillery barrage had lifted. "I found myself," wrote Lieut. Hone, in his simple, straightforward account of the affair, "with two Lewis gun teams and forty men of the Essex Regiment, and 2nd Lieut. Paterson (Signalling Officer), also one Lewis gun team and a few men of the 1st King's, with an officer of the 2nd South Staffs. On looking round my position, I found that the left flank was exposed owing to the remainder of the waves not reaching the objective. I immediately placed two Lewis guns on this flank and commenced consolidating the position. A small party of the enemy attempted to bomb us, but were dispersed by Lewis gun fire. I next visited the third line and found that the junction of Lager Alley was a weak point, so my third Lewis gun and a post were put at this point. I placed myself under the 24th Royal Fusiliers and later I received instructions to report to Major Adams, of the 22nd Royal Fusiliers." This officer and his platoon took between 60 and 70 prisoners.

The Battalion was relieved, in frosty weather, by the 1st Dorsets at 2.30 a.m. on November 16th, Colonel Carter having then one platoon in Minor, another in Wolf, yet another in the top portion of Egg, with a fourth in the same trench. A post with a Lewis gun was at the junction of Minor and Front Line. There were also two other posts, each with a Lewis gun, one at the junction of Borden and the Front Line, and the other at the junction of Egg and Front Line.

The losses of the Battalion were very heavy. Ten officers were killed (Captains Edwin Milward Charrington, Charles Graham Carson, James Murray Round, William Walter Busby, Lieut. Henry Blamires Wilcock, 2nd Lieutenants George Manners Gemmell, Bernard William Finn, John Greville Fulkes, Frederick Garnet English and Cyril Lionel Bishop Lyne) and two wounded. Six other ranks were killed, six died of wounds, 187 were wounded and 165 were missing. Of the last-named only seven were subsequently reported to be prisoners of war.

Upon relief on November 16th the Essex went to billets at Mailly Maillet and later in the day to Vauchelles-les-Aithie by motor lorries, from whence on the 19th they went to Doullens, then on the 21st to Bernaville, followed by a move to Coulouvillers on the 23rd, to Rocqueville on the 24th, to le Titre on the 25th and Gapennes on the 27th, where the Battalion was staying at the end of November. Three drafts reported there, consisting of 251 other ranks. The time was spent in physical training, arms drill, platoon drill, skirmishing, bayonet exercises, musketry, smoke helmet drill, erecting wire entanglements and cutting gaps. In December further drafts joined, numbering eight officers and 278 other ranks. The weather was snowy, but there were also ceremonial parades and what the Battalion War Diary terms "disciplinary night marches." Sports were held and the first concert was held in a barn on the Argenvillers-Gapennes road,

at which the divisional commander, Major-General W. G. Walker, V.C., C.B., was present. There was also guard mounting and much instruction in saluting with and without arms. On Christmas Day headquarters personnel and the men of each company were provided with a plentiful dinner, after which the officers dined. The end of the year came without further notable incident.

HARD FIGHTING IN 1917.

Let us now turn once again to the story of the Division, taking it from New Year Day, 1917, to the opening of the Battle of Cambrai, in November, which was the last action in which the 18th Essex served. In January, as part of the II Corps, the 2nd Division was in the Brailly area, north-east of Abbeville, and in the middle of the month took over the Courcellette sector —“a line somewhat resembling in shape an arrowhead, about 2,000 yards due north of the remains of the village of Courcellette and between Le Sars and Grandcourt.” The front line consisted of 18 disconnected posts and platoons in close support, covering a frontage of 2,500 yards. Divisional headquarters were at Usna Hill. Though fighting had died down, there was much work to do in repairing the posts and making the main communication trench, Ironside Avenue, passable. The weather was cold and the ground frozen hard. Whilst in this sector Brigadier-General A. C. Daly was invalided and Brigadier-General R. K. Walsh, D.S.O., was appointed to the command of the 6th Brigade. The 1st Royal Berkshires carried out a very successful raid on the night of February 4th-5th, in which no fewer than 51 officers and men were taken prisoner and 14 were killed or wounded. The 17th Royal Fusiliers raided Desire Support Trench clad in white smocks. Four enemy dug-outs were examined and seven prisoners taken from the 90th Mecklenburg Regiment. The Germans retaliated with a raid upon Nos. 9 and 10 Posts, when they seized a Lewis gun detachment, but themselves lost five killed. General headquarters determined upon a further advance up the valley of the Ancre and three objectives were allotted the 2nd Division, viz., (1) Grandcourt Trench from the eastern end of Boom Ravine to East Miraumont road; (2) South Miraumont Trench between the east and west Miraumont roads; (3) road skirting the south-eastern edge of Petit Miraumont. As each objective was taken a defensive flank was to be formed facing north-east along the East Miraumont road. This main attack was to be undertaken by the 99th Brigade, who had the 63rd Division on the right and the 18th Division on the left. There was also a subsidiary attack upon Desire Trench by the 6th Brigade. A rapid thaw made the ground difficult, but, nevertheless, the attack went forward in the dark hours of the early morning of February 17th. The 99th Brigade seized the first objective, but could make no further progress, despite a

great deal of fighting which brought Lance-Sergeant F. W. Palmer, 22nd Royal Fusiliers, the Victoria Cross. The 2nd South Staffords, for a time, occupied Desire Trench on their right, but subsequently had to withdraw. The two divisions, on either side, however, made good progress, the outskirts of Petit Miraumont being reached. On the night of February 18th-19th the three remaining battalions of the 6th Brigade took over the divisional front, with 1st King's on the right, 17th Middlesex in the centre and 13th Essex on the left. On the night of 20th-21st the Essex pushed forward another 50 yards and were able to form two forward posts on the right, but the enemy still held the height south-east of Petit Miraumont and so commanded the situation. Accordingly, a plan of attack was formulated for the capture of the hill, but the atrocious weather caused the project to be abandoned. The commander of the 6th Brigade stated that his right flank was in a bog, the ground being so false that about ten men or more had to be dug out or pulled out with beams and ropes, with the enemy within thirty yards of the front posts. The enemy determined to abandon Pys and Miraumont, part of the greater movement which developed into withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line. From the morning of February 24th the 2nd Division slowly went forward, with the 5th Brigade in front, having the 18th Division on the left and 2nd Australian Division on the right. The Division quickly came up against a formidable obstacle in Grevillers Trench, south of Loupart Wood, which was protected by three rows of wire, each about waist-high, together with Lady's Leg Ravine. The 99th Brigade was deputed to undertake the attack on March 10th, with the 2nd Australian Division co-operating on the right and the 18th Division smiting hard at Irles on the left. A hard frost had set the ground, but unluckily, the night before, a thaw came again, together with a thick mist. This did not stay the impetuosity of the Brigade, for the whole of the objective was quickly taken, the infantry being admirably protected by the fine shooting of the divisional artillery. Irles also fell. The 6th Brigade, which was in support, relieved the 99th Brigade on March 12th, the intention being to continue the advance by taking the Loupart Line. The enemy, however, was not disposed to hold on. Patrols of both the King's and 13th Essex felt their way carefully forward until an officer's patrol of the Essex ascertained that the Germans were apparently determined upon a stand on the Bihucourt Line. The 2nd South Staffords took the lead on March 15th, with the 17th Middlesex in close support, 13th Essex in support and 1st King's in reserve. The enemy fell back from Bihucourt on March 17th; they were everywhere in retreat. For the first time cavalry, in the form of two troops of the Yorkshire Dragoons, went ahead of the 6th Brigade, later to be supplemented by the 29th Lancers, of the Lucknow Cavalry Brigade. The 1st King's supplied the

advanced guard of the infantry. By the night of March 18th the 6th Brigade was on the high ground north-east of Mory, the Division having advanced in all 14,000 yards. The next day the Division was relieved by the 18th Division, and on March 23rd moved to the XIII Corps, First Army, being quartered in Pernes and vicinity. It was not long before it was in the thick of the fighting again, this time in the advance from Arras, which began on April 9th. The day before the Division was moved up to a point within twelve miles of the front line, headquarters being at Chateau de Boisennot. The Division took over from the 51st Division on the night of 11th-12th April, with the 6th Brigade in reserve about Roclincourt. A patrol of the King's found that the enemy was withdrawing from his advanced positions and on May 14th the 2nd Division had reached a line running from about 1,000 yards east of Willerval, south-east for approximately 500 yards in front of the Oppy line to the railway between Oppy Wood and Bailleul, thence continuing in a south-westerly direction across Hill 80. Amidst changeable weather operations became static for some days, during which the 2nd Division's southern boundaries were altered and reached to the southern end of Neuvireuil. On the night of April 18th-19th the 6th Brigade relieved the 5th Brigade, when the 13th Essex were raided by a party of the 76th Bavarians, who got in the left flank of a forward trench and took some prisoners. The right flank of the divisional front was extended somewhat on the night of the 21st-22nd, in preparation for the assault on the Oppy line, which included Oppy and Arleux Switch. For this purpose the Canadians were on the left of the 2nd Division and the 63rd Division on the right. The 5th and 6th (right) Brigade were to provide the assaulting force, with the 99th Brigade in reserve. The former had to take the area lying between Arleux and Oppy and the 6th Brigade Oppy Village and Wood. "The attacking strength of the 2nd Division at this period was weak. The total length of front to be assaulted was 2,200 yards, and the troops available numbered only 3,518; this in spite of the fact that the strongest battalions of the two strongest brigades were to be employed. And the objective to be reached was 1,200 yards distant, no light task in the face of fierce opposition. Air photographs of Arleux, Oppy and Oppy Wood, taken at this period, show both villages practically in ruins, though beneath the tumbled masses of brick and masonry deep dug-outs sheltered the enemy's troops. The wood was a scorched and shell-blasted mass of tree stumps. Nor were the British areas less shell-torn, for the enemy's bombardments had been continuous. On the day before the Oppy attack three battery commanders of the 2nd Division's Artillery were killed in their dug-out." In company with the Canadians, the 5th Brigade swept forward on April 28th, Arleux falling to the former's onslaught. The battalions of the 6th

Brigade got into the third objective and formed a defensive line reaching back to the right, which did not progress permanently beyond the first objective. The 63rd Division, on the right, was hung up and this had considerable effect on the 6th Brigade, for the enemy were enabled to attack in front and rear as they advanced from Oppy Wood and entered Oppy Village, which resulted in their being forced back to Oppy Trench and then to the British line. "The enemy was apparently quite unshaken by the barrage. The reason is interesting. A new system of holding his front line trenches had just been introduced by the enemy, for his exhaustion from the middle of 1916 to the end of the year and in the beginning of 1917 had been severe. He had, therefore, to dispose his troops in such a manner as to minimize the number of casualties. This he did by placing his men in depth, leaving machine guns to hold up any infantry attack launched against him, and keeping the bulk of his infantry back in their second and third lines for use in counter-attacks. But there was another factor in the partial failure of the first attack : the attacking battalions were very weak. With a long advance in front of them (1,200 yards), the waves, already weakened in the attack, had not sufficient strength to get through to the final objective and were unable to cope successfully with the enemy's strong counter-attack, made with unshaken troops. The 2nd Division had a frontage of attack of about 2,200 yards, with only 3,500 rifles available. Finally, there is no doubt that had the 63rd Division been able to penetrate the enemy's front line and advance in alignment with the right flank of the 2nd Division, the 6th Infantry Brigade would not have been outflanked and driven out of Oppy Village and Wood." The 99th Brigade was put in to resume the attack along the line of the 6th Brigade, about 1,000 yards. It was very weak and had available for the purpose in the two battalions, with carrying parties from other units, only 47 officers and 814 other ranks, with 46 machine guns. The attack took place on April 29th and again met with only partial success, notwithstanding a desperate struggle. The 1st Berkshires particularly distinguished themselves, Lance-Corporal James Welch winning the Victoria Cross. When the Battle of Arleux ended, Oppy Wood and Village remained untaken. The former was finally occupied until June 28th, but not by the 2nd Division, which was elsewhere. The Division was very much reduced in strength, having only 1,237 available in the 5th Brigade, 1,322 in the 6th and 1,028 in the 99th. Yet it was put into action again almost immediately, this time to the left of Oppy Wood and nearer to Fresnoy. The 1st Canadian Division was on the left and the 31st Division on the right. To better sustain the contemplated operation, which was the taking of Fresnoy Trench, running from Fresnoy Wood almost to Crucifix Lane on the outskirts of Oppy Village, the divisional commander constituted a Composite Brigade (Brigadier-General R. O. Kellett,

99th Brigade), which, in addition to the 99th Brigade headquarters, 99th Machine Gun Company and two sections each of the 5th and 6th Machine Gun Companies and 99th Trench Mortar Battery, consisted of "A," "B," "C" and "D" Battalions, each about 400 strong. The first named was made up of a company each from the four battalions of the 5th Brigade; the second (Lieut.-Colonel S. E. Norris, D.S.O., 1st King's), of two companies of the 1st King's and one company each of the 2nd South Staffords and 13th Essex; the third two companies each of the 1st Berkshires and 23rd Royal Fusiliers, whilst the fourth was composed of one company of the 22nd Royal Fusiliers and three companies of 1st K.R.R. "B" Battalion was on the right, "C" on the left, with "D" in close support and "A" in brigade reserve at the railway embankment. "C" Battalion (right) gained the whole of its objectives on May 3rd and captured between 60 and 70 prisoners. "B" Battalion was not so fortunate. The Essex and South Stafford companies were some minutes late in arriving owing to the guides losing the way. Nevertheless, the men of the King's went forward at zero and got into Fresnoy Trench, but their right was unprotected because the two delayed companies caught the full force of the barrage and had to seek cover in shell-holes in Sunken Road between Arleux and Oppy. The Germans bombed along Fresnoy Trench from Oppy Support and Crucifix Lane and the Battalion was forced back astride the Sunken Road. "D" Battalion had occupied two strong points the night before the attack, facing Oppy Wood, and held them throughout the German counter-attack, which denied the 31st Division entrance into Oppy. "A" Battalion was brought up and a company each was sent up to the old German line at Arleux Loop and the old British line to the west of that point. When the 2nd Division was relieved on May 4th its trench strength was 181 officers and 3,587 other ranks, the strongest battalion being the South Staffords, with 18 officers and 421 other ranks, and the 13th Essex next with 12 officers and 423 other ranks.

Early next morning the 2nd Division was busily reorganizing, with the 5th Brigade in the Dieval area, 6th Brigade, Bray, and 99th Brigade, Bajus. The recent fighting had shown the need for increased efficiency in rifle shooting and the use of Stokes mortars. Strenuous efforts were, therefore, made to meet these needs during a fortnight spent in reserve. Then, on May 23rd, the Division was again in line in the Oppy area, with this important difference, that Fresnoy village and trench had once again fallen to the enemy. The new line was from west of Oppy Wood to the combined Brigade post in Sunken Road. The 5th and 99th Brigades were in line, with the 6th Brigade in reserve. There were constant patrols of No Man's Land and frequent encounters with the enemy. The 6th Brigade relieved the 5th in the left divisional sector early in June and the 13th Brigade (5th Division)

replaced the 99th Brigade on June 14th. Later in June the 2nd Division joined the XI Corps in the La Bassée sector and on the night of 20th-21st June the 6th Brigade occupied the Givenchy sector, with the 13th Essex in reserve. It was quickly followed by the 99th Brigade in the Cambrin area and the 5th Brigade about the Canal. The Division was some months in this part of the battle line and was engaged in constant raiding and counter-raiding. The 1st King's repulsed a spirited enterprise on the night of June 25th. Another, two nights afterwards, against the 23rd Royal Fusiliers, was easily beaten off. A patrol of the 13th Essex, under Lance-Corporal Jones, investigated the enemy's position at Canadian Orchard on the night of June 27th-28th, and had a bombing encounter, from which the party safely returned. Throughout July the enemy probed points in the divisional line and so did the 2nd Division in return. The affair on July 20th was notable in that it was the first time that the Division projected oil cylinders which were ignited by electricity. The raids died down in August, and at the end of the month the Division was taken into reserve at Beuvry. In September the Division went back again into the line and then, in October, came a change of scene. It was at first thought it would be the Ypres sector, to share in the Passchendaele campaign, but report proved to be false in this case. As a farewell the Division discharged thousands of gas cylinders, involving 112½ tons of gas. For the rest of the month the Division was training in the Auchel area, improving so much in rifle efficiency that "practically all troops in the Division learned to fire at least 13 rounds per minute, and many of them the pre-war regulation rate of 15 rounds per minute."

FOLLOWING THE GERMAN WITHDRAWAL.

The next battle service of the 2nd Division was to be in the Cambrai sector, but before following its fortunes in that short, brilliant, but ultimately disappointing operation, the details of the service of the 13th Essex during the ten months of 1917 must be first given. On New Year Day the Battalion mustered as strongly as possible for the purpose of re-arranging platoons and constituting one section of each as bombers. That done, the Essex resumed training in trench warfare until January 9th, when they marched to new billets at Boisbergues; on the 11th they moved to Raucheval, the next day to Bouzincourt, and became brigade reserve. Working parties were supplied for several days and on January 20th the Battalion moved into support, preparatory to proceeding, four days later, into the front line, the right sub-sector of the Courcelette sector. The posts were strengthened and new wire was laid until the Essex went back to Bouzincourt, where the officers were trained in night marching on compass bearings. Stores to the value of £55 8s. 6d. were salvaged during the month. The unit was transferred to

Ovillers Huts on February 5th. Working parties were detailed daily. So well did the men work that in one case, a party commanded by 2nd Lieut. C. W. Ritson, the G.O.C. Division wrote a special letter of commendation. Two officers and 20 other ranks joined on February 10th, and Lieut.-Colonel Carter complimented "A" Company upon its subscription of £51 8s. to the War Loan. On February 16th the Battalion moved up into support at Wolfe Huts and "stood-to" on the 17th during the attack by the 6th Brigade; next day it went into the line in the left sub-sector at Courcellette. "A," "B" and "C" Companies were relieved by the 17th Middlesex at midnight on February 21st, but "A" Company were unable to get away before dawn, and so, consequently, had to wait until next day. Billets were occupied in Albert, the Battalion having sustained the loss during the recent tour of the trenches of two officers (2nd Lieut. Clifford Stokes and 2nd Lieut. Edwin George Stanislaus Munday) and 13 other ranks killed, 31 other ranks wounded and six other ranks missing. In addition, eighty men had been sent to hospital with trench feet. Great attention was paid to map reading and marching by compass, also to drill for setting-up purposes. On the last day of the month 640 gifts from Queen Alexandra's Field Force Fund were distributed. The Battalion went into support at Ovillers Huts on March 3rd and constructed a road through Courcellette, with which the divisional commander was very pleased, for he thought the progress made little short of astonishing in so short a time. Musketry claimed much time until the Battalion went into the Loupart Sector, with Battalion headquarters in Aqueduct Road. It was there, on March 12th, the enemy were noticed to be evacuating Loupart Wood. They were followed by patrols, who had established a new line of posts in the Wood by mid-day. On March 14th the Battalion had reached the Sunken Road, where it remained until relieved on March 14th, when it went into reserve at Dyke Valley Camp. There news was received that Captain Charles William Dunscombe had died of wounds sustained three days before. Colonel Carter was very pleased with the conduct of all ranks during the pursuit. "The advance," he added, "was a great strain on all ranks, who had already undergone a severe strain in holding the posts. There is no doubt that all ranks in the unit at the present time are not only trying to keep up the tradition of the Regiment, but are trying to go one better." He particularly mentioned Major A. G. Hayward, M.C., and Captain C. W. Ritson. The work done included the laying of a duck-board track from Aqueduct Road to Loupart Wood, which was named Essex Trench. The Battalion was in the Wood again on March 18th, but was in brigade reserve for the final stage of the advance. It commenced the construction of four lines of trenches 800 yards south-west of Sopignies, about three and a half miles from Loupart Wood, but on March 19th the 2nd

Division's sphere of responsibility was taken over by the 18th Division and so the Essex went back to Courcellette Camp. Thence they marched, on March 21st, to Owillers Huts and next day to Warloy, where the Sergeant Tailor and Sergeant Shoemaker were very busy refitting. On March 26th a move was made to Beauval, then on successive days to Haute Visée and Sibiville. Half the Battalion occupied billets at Couteville and half at Huclier on March 30th, where, on the last day of the month, the critical commanding officer was so pleased with the march discipline that he praised it without qualification. A draft of 24 other ranks joined on April 3rd. Lieut.-Colonel W. H. Carter relinquished command on proceeding to the Senior Officers' Infantry School, Aldershot, and was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel C. T. Martin, under whom the Battalion was transferred to billets at Curtin on April 7th. The stay was short, for "X" Huts, Eoivres, were taken over on April 11th, in readiness, next day, for going into brigade reserve in dug-outs round Roclincourt and so entering the Arras battlefield. A duck-board track was laid from Roclincourt to Maison de la Cote and Commandant's House (Oppy Sector), for which the Battalion was again complimented by the G.O.C. Division. The Essex took over a portion of the Oppy sector on April 18th, where intense shelling was endured, though this did not prevent active work upon the trenches. It was in this sector that the Battalion met with misfortune on April 22nd. Preceded by a heavy barrage, the enemy raided the new forward trench about 9 p.m.; twenty of them moving by the left flank and in rear, with a similar number on the right front. They managed to enter the trench and take some prisoners. Before they could go farther, however, they were perceived, the "S.O.S." was sent up and the artillery opened on them for some minutes, after which a company of the Essex were sent forward to retake the trench, which they promptly did. Therein they found a severely wounded officer belonging to the 76th Bavarians. The total loss of the 13th Essex in this encounter was five other ranks killed, three wounded and 22 missing. The next day the Battalion returned to dug-outs about Roclincourt. There was a rapid move or two during the next two or three days, for heavy fighting was proceeding, and on April 27th the Battalion marched to assembly trenches beyond Bailleul for the purpose of attacking on the right of Oppy Village. The men were in excellent spirits. In addition to usual habiliments of war, they carried chocolate and two cheese sandwiches, whilst a rum issue was also made before moving off. No hitch occurred on reaching the jumping off positions. Each company was organized in three platoons, representing three waves, each wave consisting of two lines—the first bombers and riflemen and the second Lewis gunners and rifle bombers. Moppers-up for each wave formed up in rear of the second line. Carrying parties and garrisons for the strong

points were placed in rear of the last wave. The Highland Light Infantry and 17th Middlesex were on the left and the Royal Marines on the right. At 4.25 a.m. on April 28th the barrage commenced and eight minutes later the first wave crossed the enemy's front line trench, with the exception of the extreme right of the Battalion, which was held up by uncut wire and lost heavily from machine gun fire in endeavouring to get through it. Touch was lost, too, with the Royal Marines, though contact was maintained with the 17th Middlesex on the immediate left of the Essex. The advance continued under cover of the barrage to the eastern end of Oppy Wood, when a German bombing attack was made on the right flank, whilst, under support of machine gun and rifle fire from Oppy Village, large numbers of the enemy advanced down the Sunken Road from Crucifix Lane. A company of the 1st K.R.R., in support, was ordered to move forward and form a defensive flank, but was unable to get beyond the British front line because of the destructive fire. Matters became critical. The 17th Middlesex were counter-attacked on the front and left flank, whilst numbers of the enemy, making their way through Oppy Wood, managed to get in their rear and re-occupy portions of their old front line. Messengers sent from Battalion headquarters did not return and as the fighting continued at 9 a.m. the troops were ordered to fall back and consolidate on the German front line. Small parties succeeded in detaching themselves, but found the enemy also in the trench and were unable to cope with them. All the officers of the Battalion had become casualties, with the majority of the N.C.O.'s, and the survivors were much disorganized and exhausted. Small parties held out doggedly and were able at eventide to return to the old British line by running from shellhole to shellhole. The casualties were heavy and seven officers were killed (Captain John James Gordon Clarke, 6th Essex, commanding "C" Company, Captain Claude Wilson Ritson, commanding "B" Company, 2nd Lieuts. William Brown Paterson, M.C., acting Adjutant, Douglas Howard Mason, commanding "A" Company, Jack Ainslake Barrett, Stephen Foster Vowles and Rupert Ibbotson, 5th Essex), whilst three were missing, 2nd Lieuts. A. C. Leech, H. P. Turner and W. Freeman. Four were wounded, including Captain E. C. Lowings, commanding "D" Company, so that all the company commanders were casualties. Three other ranks were killed, 79 wounded and 240 missing. Of the latter the great proportion were afterwards returned as killed.

The remnants of the Battalion were relieved at night and returned to the Roclincourt dug-outs, where a draft of four officers and 159 other ranks joined. On the 29th the Essex went into tents at Ecurie, from whence 2nd Lieut. R. G. Trebilco, commanding "A" Company, 2nd Lieut. F. H. Austin and 2nd Lieut. R. B. Tonkin, with 120 other ranks, were sent as the

Battalion's contribution to the composite Battalion, as part of the Composite Brigade, for the renewed attack on Oppy on May 3rd, whereat they suffered 28 casualties, including six killed and six missing. The remainder of the Battalion moved to huts at Marœuil on April 30th, where Lieut.-Colonel C. T. Martin assumed command of the 6th Brigade until May 4th and was succeeded in the 18th Essex by Major A. W. Derviche-Jones, M.C. Colonel Martin did not return to the Battalion, for he took over the 2nd H.L.I., and Lieut.-Colonel A. E. F. Harris, D.S.O., was appointed to the command. The Essex went back to Roclincourt on May 4th for work on the Bailleul light railway and to salvage stores. The value of the latter recovered during the month of April was £581 1s., the highest total in the Brigade and the third highest in the Division. There was another move on May 18th to Camplain-Chatelaine, where a draft of 46 other ranks reported. Several well-known officers returned from detachment duty in order to strengthen the list of senior officers, consequent on losses in the recent battle. To better assist training, the Battalion was organized for the time being into two companies—No. 1 under Captain J. G. H. Kennefick and No. 2 under Captain C. C. Cole. A return was made to Roclincourt by motor 'buses.

The early days of June were spent in tents at Ecurie, from whence the Battalion went into the line in the Arleux sector on June 3rd, with two companies in front and two in support. The enemy were quiet. One man was killed and another wounded by aeroplane bombing. A draft of 32 other ranks reported on June 7th, the day before the Battalion went into support, with Battalion headquarters at Willerval, when five men were accidentally wounded. The Essex went into Corps reserve on June 15th and then came a move to the north upon the 2nd Division being transferred to XI Corps. Reserve billets were occupied at Gorre, in the Givenchy sector. Another draft of 120 was received. The Battalion was in and out of the line in exchange with the 17th Middlesex, having a strength of 29 officers and 949 other ranks at the close of the month. Certain of the personnel did a turn of duty with the R.E. as "sappers' mates," and others worked with a tunnelling company. On July 6th Major Carter returned from England and resumed duties as second-in-command, but he did not hold the position long, for he took over command of the 7th South Staffordshires on July 18th. He was succeeded as second-in-command by Captain A. A. Macfarlane Grieve, M.C., of the Highland Light Infantry. Officers were constantly going to and returning from schools of instruction. On one occasion 280 other ranks were sent to the 2nd Division Draft Training School for intensive training. On July 25th two sections of rifle bombers (12 other ranks), under Lieut. A. E. Bunting, carried out an attack, in conjunction with the 6th T.M. Battery, on the enemy's line

north of Old Man's Corner, for the purpose of distracting attention from a raid which was being carried out by the 1st King's on the right. The party got within seventy yards of the German wire and at zero hour each rifle bomber sent over six bombs. When a missile reached the enemy line a red Vercy light was sent up, in response to which a barrage was put down on the British front line. The party withdrew without casualty. The effective strength of the Battalion was given on July 31st as 35 officers and 886 other ranks, the fighting strength, 21 officers and 669 other ranks, and the trench strength, 17 officers and 548 other ranks.

August was a comparatively quiet month. Patrols were sent out constantly. There was little change in the strength, which slightly decreased from the totals given for July. On September 1st the whole Battalion used the range at Le Quesnoy, and headquarters and "A" Company also marched across country in the dark, wearing box respirators. Some of the men had tape as a means of keeping touch and direction, whilst the remainder held the bayonet scabbards of the men in front. No. 3 Company, 1st Portuguese Infantry, was attached for three days for instruction on September 2nd. Hostile aeroplanes were active and there was some shelling of points at Gorre, particularly the Brewery. Light trench mortars, with field artillery, searched the enemy's line on September 5th. They retaliated, three officers being wounded. A German captive balloon was brought down on September 7th, the day on which the Battalion went to billets in the tobacco factory, Bethune. A football match was played with the 11th Essex and resulted in a draw of one goal each. A party of the 13th Essex, under Lieut. F. J. Southern, assisted the Medium Trench Mortar Batteries in a minor operation on September 27th, which was completely successful. The effective strength at the close of the month was 41 officers and 845 other ranks, fighting strength, 27 officers and 557 other ranks, and trench strength, 23 officers and 472 other ranks. The Battalion moved to Lozingshem on October 7th and the 6th Brigade was inspected by G.O.C. First Army at Raimbert on October 15th. Training occupied the remainder of the month. The personnel had increased considerably, for on October 31st the effective strength was 39 officers and 1,072 other ranks, the fighting strength, 39 officers and 1,071 other ranks, and the trench strength, 28 officers and 884 other ranks. November came with much attention still being paid to musketry. Then, by daily marches, the Battalion reached Houtkerque, where training was still actively undertaken. Colonel Harris left for England on November 21st, and Major J. Walsh took over command. Next day a warning order was received that the Battalion would move to an unknown destination.

CAMBRAI.

The artillery and the R.E. had been in action for a fortnight west of Passchendaele, when the infantry of the Division, after a period of training in the Auchel Area (I Corps), east of Bethune, was transferred to the Wormhoudt Area (II Corps). The movement was completed by the morning of November 9th. The intention was to put the Division into the line at Passchendaele, but there was no immediate prospect of that. The battlefield was held by one division and there was another division waiting to relieve it, so that the 2nd Division gave prompt heed to rumours that service was likely to be found elsewhere. The most generally accepted statement was that it was destined for Italy and colour was given to the report by orders to concentrate in the Wormhoudt area by noon on November 21st, in readiness to leave the Second Army. The Cambrai operation had, however, opened the day before and when on November 21st a telephone message was received that a move was to be made to Bapaume and the stations nearby, the secret was out. The transfer was completed by November 26th. The troops suffered somewhat from the long train journey, but what caused genuine discomfort was the long marches in the rain to concentration camps. The same night the 2nd Division took over from the 36th Division south-west of Bourlon village, with the 99th Brigade on the right and the 6th Brigade on the left.

The situation was already stabilising. Strong enemy reinforcements had held up further advance, but heavy fighting was proceeding for the possession of Bourlon Wood and Bourlon Village, which had been alternately won and lost. On the night of November 26th most of Bourlon Wood and the high ground north-west of it remained in English hands, but the Germans still held the village. To the south the enemy were stoutly clinging to the high ground by the village of Fontaine Notre Dame and thus, by so doing, were effectively preventing further advance. The entry of the 2nd Division and other troops into the fray was designed to add weight to the attack. Bourlon Village and Fontaine Notre Dame were unsuccessfully attacked by the Guards and 62nd Division on the morning of November 27th, by which time the 2nd Division had only just completed relief of the 36th Division. Barely half an hour after General Pereira had taken over (10.30 a.m.) he was informed that the 62nd Division was being counter-attacked, and though a brigade of the 47th Division, which had been earmarked to relieve the 62nd Division after the attack, was already on the march, it would be doubtful if it could arrive in time. The 5th Brigade (as reserve) was therefore, moved to Hermies, at which point it

arrived at 1.15 p.m., only to learn that no aid was required, as the brigade of the 47th Division had reached its allotted position. The 62nd Division, facing Bourlon Village and occupying the greater portion of the Wood, was in need of reinforcement, and at night the 22nd Royal Fusiliers (99th Brigade) were sent to the right brigade of the 62nd Division and the 17th Royal Fusiliers (5th Brigade) took their place.

The line held by the 2nd Division contained an enemy salient, which threatened its security, and an attack was accordingly made thereon on the morning of November 29th by a company and a half of the K.R.R., who succeeded in pinching off the greater portion with a loss of 75 per cent. of the personnel. By this time the 62nd Division (on the right) had been succeeded by the 47th Division and the 51st (Highland) Division by the 56th (London) Division, whilst the 22nd R.F. had returned to the 2nd Division. Thus the divisions stood on November 30th. "All had worked hard," wrote the Divisional Commander, "to restore order to a line which had been taken over hurriedly during operations and to replace chaos by organization. Had it not been for this it is doubtful whether, when the storm broke on the divisional front, the line could have been maintained and the concentrated attacks of three German divisions beaten off with most severe losses to the enemy. The subsequent story is one so brimful of heroism that it deserves to take its place in English history for all time and to be a proud day in the lives of all those splendid British soldiers, who, by their singlehearted devotion to duty, saved what would have been undoubtedly a catastrophe had they given way. The troops can be said to have been already in action for three days, as constant movements and reliefs under shellfire had had to be carried out. Moreover, the situation in and around Bourlon Wood had been so obscure that troops had to be held in constant readiness close up to the line on this flank instead of resting." The 99th Brigade (including one battalion of the 5th Brigade) held the right sub-sector, three battalions in line, one in support about the sugar factory on the Bapaume-Cambrai road, with the fifth in reserve in trenches east of Hermies. The 6th Brigade (in the left sub-sector) had the 13th Essex on the right and 1st King's on the left, with the 2nd South Staffordshires and 12th Middlesex in support respectively. Two companies of the 17th D.C.L.I. (Pioneers) were attached to each of the Brigades, whilst the artillery were posted near the Canal du Nord and north of Havrincourt village.

THE GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK.

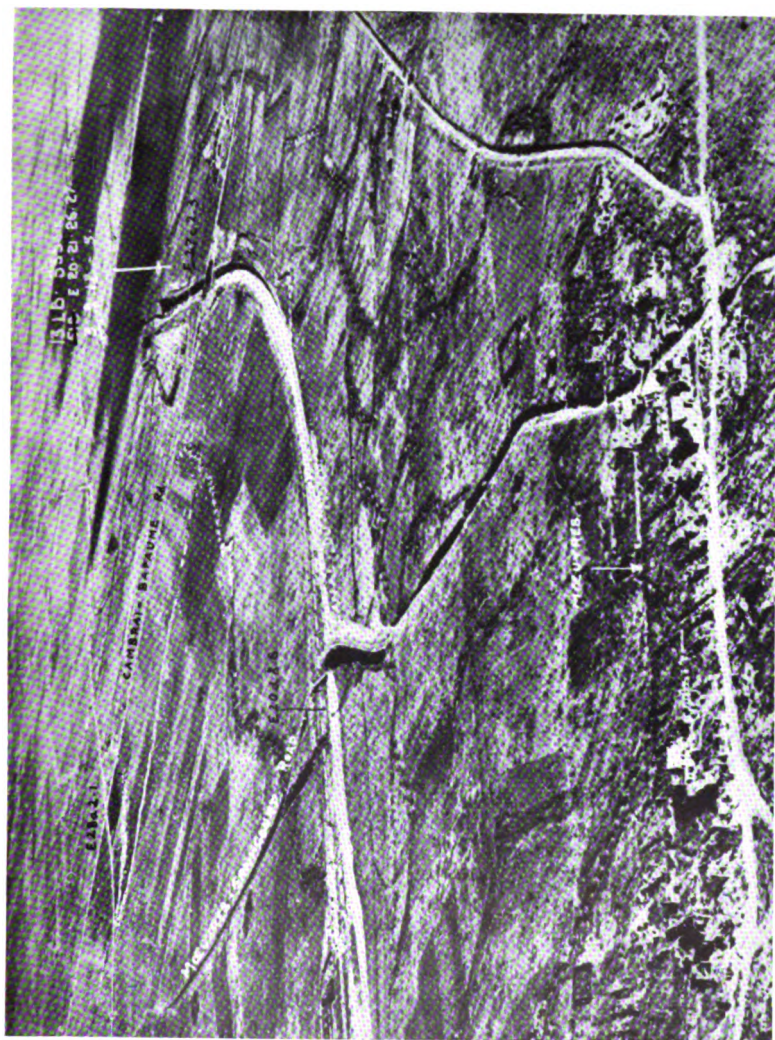
From dawn on November 30th the enemy shelling had been persistent, with a tendency to increase in violence. Between eight and nine a.m. it reached the apex and cut the communication between the 99th Brigade headquarters in sunken road in the Hindenburg Support Line west of Graincourt and the two

battalions on the right. Thereafter the whole of the enemy line seemed in movement, with large bodies of troops advancing from Quarry Wood and the neighbourhood of Mœuvres. The fighting on the 99th Brigade front was hard and determined on both sides. The 1st Royal Berkshires, on the right, gained much fame for the way they held to their line of posts, but the epic story of this Brigade concerns the 17th Royal Fusiliers. The valour of the rearguard, which held the enemy at bay whilst the rest of the Battalion retired from the front line to the main line of resistance, added distinction to a gallant regiment. Officers and men kept the enemy back, fighting until the last. None escaped with their lives. Captain Stone, the commander, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. The 1st K.R.R.C., too, stood firm. The work of the machine guns was also of supreme value. The fight was waged with great fury all day long, but when the struggle died down at eventide only the portion of the line seized by the Rifles two days before remained in enemy hands.

Turning to the fortunes of the 6th Brigade, on the left, the divisional historian comments that the line was ill-adapted for defence. "It was cut through the centre by the Canal du Nord, a kind of gigantic dry moat about 80ft. broad at the top and 40ft. at the bottom. The steep sides of this moat and the bottom of it were of brick. The canal ran from south to north, not only through the 6th Brigade line, but also through the enemy's position east of Mœuvres, and from his trenches he was able to enfilade the bridges, so that they could not be used. In consequence, communication between the British troops east and west of the canal was most difficult and hazardous. The bed of the Canal du Nord was dry and if a man wanted to cross it he had to slide down a slippery 28ft. wall and climb up the other side by means of a rope the while the enemy opened a galling fire on him with machine guns and rifles." The Brigade had the 1st King's on the left, who linked up with the Queen's Westminsters, of the 56th Division, on their left. Two companies were in line, with two in support. This Battalion had the 17th Middlesex behind it in dug-outs just south of the Bapaume-Cambrai road. The position on the right was held by the 18th Essex, who had "D" Company (Captain H. T. Jessop) next to the 1st King's, occupying a trench on the western side of the Canal du Nord. Next to them were "B" Company (Captain F. R. Keeble), who garrisoned Lock 5 and the neighbourhood. "A" (Captain H. J. Duff) and "C" Companies were in support.

HOLDING THE LINE.

In order to appreciate better the work of the 18th Essex on this momentous day, let the story first be told of the 1st King's, on the left. "Stand to" was ordered at 8.50 a.m. on report of the enemy massing, and at 9.30 a.m. the latter advanced from Quarry Wood. "C" Company opened fire on them and were



Air photograph looking South-East, showing Moerwes in the foreground. Lock No. 5 of the Canal du Nord is upon the extreme left, and the Bapaume-Cambrai road on the right, 1918.

(Imperial War Museum, Crown Copyright).

reinforced by two platoons of "D" Company, their places being taken by two platoons of the Middlesex. A quarter of an hour later "C" Company reported that the attack had been broken up and the artillery were asked to slacken fire. At 9.50 a.m., however, "A" Company reported a strong effort in preparation against their left from Bourlon village, and ten minutes afterwards the attack developed in two extended lines. The Germans surged up against the Queen's Westminsters, of the 56th Division, and then joined issue along the whole front of "B" Company, of the King's, practically annihilating it by sheer weight of numbers. Out of four officers and 125 other ranks, only two officers and a score of men got back to the support trench by way of Donner Weg, followed by a large party of hostile bombers. The latter's advance was arrested by a bombing party under Sergeant Woods and they were driven back to within fifty yards of the junction of the trench with the front line. There a block was formed, where numerous attacks were stoutly resisted throughout the day. An enemy detachment, of about the strength of a company, made across the open between Donner Weg and Edda Weg, but were held up by old wire and practically destroyed by rifle and Lewis gun fire. Some of the survivors commenced sniping from shellholes, but this was too much for the King's, who climbed out of the trench and killed them with bomb and bayonet. Another hostile bombing enterprise developed down Edda Weg and reached a point within fifty yards of the support line. Sergeant Gannon drove them back about thirty yards, but lost his five supporters and had to retire. C.S.M. Jackson and Sergeant Gannon organized another party and this time, partly by bombing from the trench and from the top, they forced the enemy to retire for some distance and thus the position remained for the rest of the day. "C" Company, of the King's, had an even more trying time. The enemy bombardment particularly struck three isolated posts on the Company's left, only one of which was held by day. This was rushed by a party moving close up to the barrage. Another enemy effort developed upon the railway junction in the sunken road, which was so timed that it coincided with the appearance of another large party of Germans who had worked round the left front and attacked the sunken road from the rear. The fighting was stubborn, but the Company's casualties were so severe that only one officer (2nd Lieut. Scott) and a dozen survivors were able to retire into a trench running out of the sunken road. They were again outflanked and forced to retire down the trench until they reached a bank across Ernst Weg. This they lined and, with the aid of a Stokes gun, were able to hold up the enemy. Machine gun fire caused the survivors to retire once more, when they joined a party which was forming a defensive flank facing east in the main communication trench leading back from Battalion headquarters. This resistance had given the defence

a valuable breathing time, but once they had broken through the enemy quickly filtered by Battalion headquarters and reached the ruined factory, also a point two hundred yards below it on the sunken road. Battalion headquarters personnel, with men of the D.C.L.I., refused to give way and fought so well that within three-quarters of an hour the enemy were driven back again, with heavy loss. Lieut. J. A. Armstrong mounted a Lewis gun in the factory and put out of action a light machine gun, which was captured later. "A" Company, of the 17th Middlesex, assisted in the good work along Ernst Weg, and at 2 p.m. Lieut. Nethercote and forty men of "C" Company, 18th Essex, attempted to bomb up the communication trench from the block held by the Middlesex, but it made no impression. At 4 p.m. "C" Company, 17th Middlesex, came up and took over the new front line from Battalion headquarters to Edda Weg, the remainder of the King's closing to the left. "B" Company, of the Middlesex, covered the right flank and by 5 p.m. were in touch with their comrades of "A" Company. A company of the South Staffordshires also came up in support. At 7 p.m. orders were received for an attack on Lock 5 in co-operation with the 13th Essex on the eastern side of the Canal, with a view of relieving "D" Company, of the latter, who had been cut off. A determined effort was made to force a way up the communication trenches and also to bomb up Edda Weg, but strong enemy resistance could not be overcome and the attempts had to be relinquished. Two companies of the 2nd H.L.I. entered the front line to assist the hard-pressed King's and Middlesex, and they were needed, for at 11 o'clock next morning the enemy made a strong effort from Lock 5, covered by low-flying 'planes, which had some success on the right, enabling them to work westward along Elsa Weg. The covering machine guns were engaged by Lewis guns and they were silenced, with the exception of a light machine gun in the vicinity of Elsa Weg, which was, however, destroyed later by a Stokes gun. The Germans fell back and very few managed to reach the bridge near Lock 5. In the afternoon the attack flared up again on the right and left, but along the front of the 1st King's it was broken up by the barrage. The trial ended in the early hours of December 2nd, when the 2nd H.L.I. took over.

MAGNIFICENT RESISTANCE OF THE 18th ESSEX.

The story of the two days' fighting on the left having been told, let us turn to the fortunes of the 18th Essex on the right, who were subjected to as equally fierce a test. They had taken over only the night before the line astride the Canal du Nord, to the south-east of Mœuvres, from the 2nd South Staffordshires. "B" Company (Keeble) were on the right and they immediately commenced improving the defences by digging small trenches for Lewis gun and rifle sections on the northern and eastern

edges of Lock 5 and reconnoitring the underground passages thereabouts. Captain Keeble also took a patrol over the open ground to the west, with a view to occupying it the next night. "D" Company (Jessop), on the left, on the western side of the Canal du Nord, had the 1st King's as their neighbours. The wire was inspected all along the front by 2nd Lieut. E. L. Corps and the platoons were engaged in deepening the trench and replacing the fire steps where they had been blown in by shell fire. "A" Company (Duff) were in support to "B" and "C" Company were in the same relationship to "D." Apart from the customary inspection of the defences, Captain Duff reconnoitred open ground on his right, with the idea that it might be incorporated the next night. No hostile patrols were seen and the night was fairly quiet. At 6.30 a.m. on November 30th the enemy began to put down a barrage on Lock 5, the bridge on the Canal and that portion of the waterway lying to the south, also Canal Trench and the open ground to the east, but it was not of an intensive character. An hour later, however, it became more severe and it was evident that an attack was coming. At 9.30 a.m. the offensive was launched at several points—from the Mœuvres-Bourlon road, from a gap in the wire of the front trenches, the sunken road, and from Cable Trench. They delivered a determined onslaught on "B" Company at Lock 5, but the Essex men refused to budge. The attack was beaten off, but nearly the whole of the ammunition and bombs were expended. Meanwhile, three sections of the reserve platoon, with a Vickers gun, lined the sunken road, facing north-east, and the fourth section held the bridge, with their front towards the north and north-west. Bombing blocks were also established in Canal Trench and Cable Trench. This reserve platoon had to face another hostile onslaught from the north-east and here, again, practically the whole of the ammunition was expended. The strength of the enemy was difficult to estimate, but from five hundred to seven hundred men were seen in the open. The slaughter was considerable and the survivors either retired altogether or sought what cover they could in No Man's Land. The crisis had not passed, however, and energetic efforts were made to obtain more ammunition. The dug-out in the sunken road was searched and about 300 rounds of S.A.A. were retrieved and loaded into the Lewis gun magazines. Battalion headquarters were informed at 9.50 a.m. that "B" Company had beaten off all attacks and "D" Company were observed in their original position in Street Trench, west of the Canal, at 10.20 a.m. Five minutes later the position suddenly worsened, for troops could be seen retiring on the right under an intense barrage of all arms. At 10.30 a.m. there was another attack from the north-east and "B" Company had almost completely expended their ammunition, when 2nd Lieut. E. C. Hall opportunely arrived with a platoon of "A" Company

and several boxes of rifle cartridges. This platoon prolonged the line to the right, being mostly in the open, and served as a timely check to further hostile progress in that direction. The Lewis gunners and riflemen fought with splendid pluck, but again ammunition began to run out, whilst several casualties were suffered from the unceasing bombardment. The position became so critical that "B" Company (reduced to forty rifles) retired and passed through the sunken road at the bridge, taking with them the survivors of the garrison there, numbering six rifles. Among the killed was 2nd Lieut. Edward Charles Hall, of "A" Company. They had no ammunition or grenades and were closely followed by the enemy, who occupied Lock 5 and the sunken road immediately. Captain Duff, of "A" Company, rallied the survivors, whilst Captain Keeble organized a mixed party from "A" and "B" Companies and a platoon of the 2nd South Staffordshires (2nd Lieut. C. T. Hinde), which, having been replenished with ammunition, counter-attacked and drove the more enterprising of the pursuers back to the sunken road. Again the Germans poured in fresh troops and again there was a lack of ammunition. Captain Keeble formed a bombing block in Canal Trench, about ten yards south of the sunken road, and also manned the parapet of Canal Trench facing east and west. Reserves of S.A.A. and grenades began to arrive in plenty and the enemy advance was definitely stayed. The more impetuous were cleared off the open ground east and west of Canal Trench and the remainder retired to the sunken road. Captain Keeble organized a bombing enterprise thereupon, but had to withdraw owing to the numbers holding the road and to the posting of machine guns. Canal Trench, from the bombing block for a length running south, was garrisoned by a platoon of "A" Company and three of the 2nd South Staffordshires, whilst two platoons of "A" Company and another platoon of the South Staffordshires occupied the trench running east and west. The conduct of Captains Keeble and Duff, it was noted, together with 2nd Lieut. C. T. Hinde (South Staffordshires), was beyond praise. "The determination shown by these gallant officers not to yield one inch to the enemy had a greatly stimulating effect on their men." The Germans made repeated sallies from the sunken road in an effort to approach Canal Trench from the north-east, but they were always beaten back with heavy loss. The defenders were not idle and during the night unsuccessful attempts were made by Captain Keeble and Lieut. Hinde upon the sunken road, also a more carefully prepared attack organized by Captains Duff and Keeble. Relief then came to the tired troops, who handed over to the 22nd Royal Fusiliers. The situation in front was very obscure and at 11.45 a.m. patrols were sent out from battalion headquarters to get in touch with "B" and "D" Companies. No news had been received from the latter since they had been seen at 10.20 on the previous

morning. Written orders were sent to the O.C. "D" Company to the effect that if he had been driven out of his position he was at once to counter-attack and establish a line running west from the bridge. These orders did not reach him, for he had been cut off, whilst clinging desperately to his original position. "C" Company had also suffered considerably, for the commander reported that he had only a strength of three officers and 25 other ranks at Trench Junction. Two platoons had been attacked from the north-west and west and were practically exterminated holding on with the 1st King's. The other two platoons, lying in the open, were attacked both from the front and from the west and east, a number of the enemy having crossed the Canal by the bridge. They lost heavily and had to fall back to avoid being cut off. Lieut. H. L. Hughes was sent with orders that "C" Company should at once counter-attack and re-establish themselves in their former position. Notwithstanding that two previous efforts had been made, with the assistance of men of the South Staffordshires and 1st King's this was done and a portion of the trenches was re-taken. Orders were then sent that the commander of "C" Company should place himself under the O.C. 1st King's. Captain J. Aylmer (acting second-in-command) was asked to convey this intimation to the 1st King's and ascertain the situation on the western bank of the Canal. He was also told to inform the 1st King's that it was the intention of the 13th Essex to retake the sunken road if at all possible. 2nd Lieut. H. V. Cook ("C" Company) was able to establish touch with Captain Keeble ("B" Company) as the latter was retiring from Lock 5. Lieut. Cook sent a corporal and eleven men, with five boxes of ammunition to the Lock. They did not reach it and were never seen again. Runners could not get in touch with "D" Company owing to the fact that many Germans were in rear of the latter. Lieut.-Colonel Alhan (2nd South Staffordshires) became commander of the Forward Area. The situation was very critical and at noon the 17th Middlesex were briskly engaged with an enemy party which had penetrated the line immediately west of the Canal. Another re-arrangement placed all the troops west of the Canal under one command and all those east of, and including, the Canal under Lieut.-Colonel Walsh, of the 13th Essex. By 4 p.m. "C" Company had been reduced to two officers and 15 other ranks.

"D" COMPANY'S LAST STAND.

It is now time to turn to "D" Company and tell the story of their historic resistance, which drew from the Commander-in-Chief a special and appreciative mention in despatches. It was 8 p.m. on November 30th before battalion headquarters were made acquainted with the position of the Company. At that hour Sergeant L. S. Legg and another man reported that they had escaped and that the enemy had surrounded their

comrades. This information caused energetic attempts to be made to reach the beleaguered company, but, unfortunately, without success. Throughout the night these efforts were continued and it was reluctantly realized ere dawn that before help could come the survivors, without ammunition, would be rushed and forced to surrender. This proved to be the case, but it was after a resistance of which the Regiment and County have reason to be very proud. It subsequently transpired that the officer of the watch (2nd Lieut. E. L. Corps) reported to his C.O. (Captain Jessop), at 8.45 a.m., when the hostile barrage was laid on the sector, that the enemy were lined up in waves, one thousand yards away, ready for the attack. The S.O.S. was sent up and repeated at Company headquarters. The men went to their battle positions under a very heavy bombardment, which was, luckily, fraught with little loss because the gunners were over-estimating the range. Captain J. D. Steele, second-in-command, was one of the few to become casualties. All ranks were warned to take the best cover possible, only one sentry being retained in each fire bay. The British artillery joined in and smote with murderous effect the close masses of advancing infantry. Nevertheless, they deployed into artillery formation of sections in file and continued their forward movement. The dead and broken ground favoured them until they got within 200 yards of "D" Company's position. Vigorous rifle and Lewis gun fire was then opened upon them. The enemy stopped, then withdrew, but advanced again after re-formation. Again they were repulsed, but the Essex men had to be very watchful, for isolated parties tried to reach them by way of sunken roads and the canal. About 11 a.m. the situation worsened. The enemy were seen upon the Company's right and left flanks, other British troops having been forced back. Telephone communication with Battalion headquarters had been cut early in the action and attempts were made to get through by means of runners. About this time Captain Jessop was wounded and the command devolved upon Lieut. J. D. Robinson, with 2nd Lieut. Corps as the only other officer. The German hold on the Canal was steadily strengthened and by noon it was noted that they were upon the right flank and rear. They tried to bomb their way along the former, but were met with equal resolution, and were soon forced back, Privates Smith and Nightingale showing great enterprise and courage. Then the attack came again, this time on the left, but with no better result. The Company were in excellent spirit, but, unfortunately, rifle ammunition and grenades were running low. "However," wrote an officer, "we have had orders from the Battalion to the effect that we are to hold on at all costs and we hope communication will be obtained with headquarters, even though the runners who have returned report that the enemy has worked round to our rear from the

flank. Our position, forming a natural strong point on all sides, has cost the enemy great loss in his endeavour to capture us." Company snipers were busily employed holding up parties of bombers, and in one of the sorties thirteen of the enemy were captured and disarmed, being placed under charge of Sergt. Legg and the reserve platoon. The sniping continued throughout the afternoon and proved a great hindrance to the German advance in this sector. At 4.30 p.m. there was much aerial activity, 'planes of both sides being engaged, and the Company signalled its plight by S.O.S. and other methods. A council of war was also held, at which, in addition to the two surviving officers, there were present C.S.M. A. H. Edwards, Platoon Sergeants C. Phillips, E. C. Parsons, W. Fairbrass, R. Lodge and L. S. Legg. The position was regarded as hopeless, owing to the fact that ammunition and grenades were almost exhausted, but it was resolved to continue the resistance during the night, for they had been ordered to hold the position at all costs. The enemy were now enfilading the canal on the Company's right and caused the line to be shortened slightly. Sergeant Legg volunteered, with one man, to try and get through the enemy and inform headquarters of the plight. It was regarded as a forlorn hope, but it succeeded, as many a forlorn hope has done before. The men were comforted with the hope that the Battalion would counter-attack, and with an occasional shot from a sniper the night slowly passed. At 7.20 a.m. all was quickly over. The enemy rushed in from flank and right rear and quickly forced surrender. The men were in a state of great exhaustion, having held on for 22 hours with magnificent courage. "It was chiefly due to their discipline," wrote a surviving officer, "that we were able to hold the position as long as we did."

The casualties from November 30th to December 5th were heavy. Four officers were reported wounded and missing, three wounded and two missing, whilst sixteen other ranks were killed and 78 wounded, with 269 missing. In the latter category there were, of course, scores of killed and wounded who could not be returned other than as missing because headquarters were not at the time acquainted with their fate.

The Division remained unbroken and had lost surprisingly little ground considering the weight of attack. The 24th Royal Fusiliers, of the 5th Brigade, relieved the 17th Royal Fusiliers, of the 99th Brigade, on the right, whilst, on the left, in the 6th Brigade area, the place of the 13th Essex was taken by the 22nd Royal Fusiliers, also of the 6th Brigade, the Essex men going into support west of Graincourt. The 2nd Highland Light Infantry were brought in later and replaced the 22nd Royal Fusiliers, whilst the 2nd Oxford and Bucks were moved to the 99th Brigade area. Thus the units of the reserve brigade were equally divided between the two brigades. Fighting went on, but without definite result. On the night of December 1st-2nd

the 186th Brigade (West Riding Division) was brought in and placed in reserve. The Germans made two or three attempts to turn the left flank on December 2nd and 3rd, but were foiled. On December 4th came orders for withdrawal from the Bourslon Salient to a new main line of resistance, and although there was bright moonlight that night, the readjustment was effected without loss. By dawn on December 5th the 24th Royal Fusiliers and Oxford and Bucks held a covering line, with the 17th Royal Fusiliers and 2nd Highland Light Infantry in the outpost line and main line of resistance. The 6th Brigade (including the 13th Essex) was at Lebusquière and the 99th Brigade in the vicinity of Hermies. The enemy promptly occupied the abandoned territory, but their further progress was definitely stopped when they came up against the 2nd Division. The covering line was evacuated on the night of December 6th-7th and the outpost and main line of resistance became the new frontier. On December 8th the 13th Essex relieved the 2nd Oxford and Bucks in the area west of Demicourt and remained there until December 14th, when they moved back to Lebusquière. Six days later the Battalion went into support and relieved the 22nd Royal Fusiliers, being shelled in so doing and losing one officer wounded, four other ranks killed and three wounded. On December 23rd the Essex went into the front line in place of the 1st King's, and three days later were in billets in Hermies. Thence, on December 29th, they went into support again and on the last day of 1917 the appointment of Lieut.-Colonel J. Walsh, of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, to the command of the Battalion was notified under date November 22nd.

On January 4th, 1918 the 13th Essex went into billets at Racquigny, the Division having been relieved. The weather was very bad. Cold and frost had been succeeded by a quick thaw and heavy rains, which reduced the ground to the state of a quagmire. Training was actively undertaken, particularly by platoons. The Division took over La Vacquerie sector on January 22nd and 23rd, the 13th Essex moving to billets in Metz, where work was undertaken on the defences. On January 28th the 17th Royal Fusiliers were relieved at La Vacquerie and on the last day of the month the Battalion moved into support trenches at Villers Pluich, having then an effective strength of 40 officers and 826 other ranks, a ration strength of 26 officers and 662 other ranks and a trench strength of 22 officers and 526 other ranks.

DISBANDMENT.

Early in February orders came to disband the 13th Essex, the 17th Middlesex and the 22nd Royal Fusiliers. The Essex men were distributed among the other county battalions on the western front. All the disbanded units had fought most gallantly and, as the divisional historian has written, "Their going was very deeply regretted by all ranks of the Division."

15th BATTALION

15th Battalion The Essex Regiment.

THE story of the 15th Battalion The Essex Regiment might quite fairly be considered to belong to the Territorial units, but it has been included among the Service Battalions because it was not so designated until enlistment into the Territorial Army had been superseded by recruitment under the Conscription Acts, and the personnel was, therefore, largely composed of men without special association with the Territorial Force. The genesis of the Battalion was, however, distinctly Territorial and several of its officers had Essex associations. The 2/4th Battalion The Essex Regiment—the second line unit of the 4th (Territorial) Battalion—was formed at Brentwood in November, 1914. It was despatched to Stamford in December, 1914, and early in January, 1915, was transferred to Great Yarmouth for coast defence work. Whilst at the East Coast port in June, 1915, the “A” category men were sent to Thetford and the remainder were formed into the 65th Provisional Battalion, the numbers being made up by transfers from other units, including the Warwickshires. The Battalion remained upon duty at Great Yarmouth until January, 1917, when it was reconstituted the 15th Battalion The Essex Regiment, and though continuing to be responsible for coast defence, it was also trained as a B1 Battalion for service overseas, being one of the few category B1 Battalions selected for this duty. When the 15th Essex embarked for France in May, 1918, a few of the men had seen previous service overseas and had been wounded, but the majority suffered from physical disabilities or were over age for the first line and had hitherto been considered unfit for active service. The impression was that the Battalion was to be used as a labour unit. Being a Graded Battalion, the men never marched with packs, which were carried by transport. It was, however, involved in the fighting which took place in the reoccupation of Lille, the crossing of the Scheldt and the advance through Flanders, and was notified on October 25th, 1918, that as it had acquitted itself so well in action it would be henceforth designated an “A” Battalion—“which intimation,” wrote an officer, “was received with mixed feelings, as the men thought they might have to carry their packs in future!” “They were a very mixed battalion physically,” wrote their commanding officer, “but very willing, and there was a splendid spirit throughout, so that we were known in the Brigade as the ‘Happy Battalion’.” The great offensive by the Germans had almost spent itself when the Battalion arrived, but a busy time was spent in preparing for the counter offensive which was to take the Allied armies forward to victory. The 15th Essex were

among the first troops to enter Lille. Towards the close of October they were in part of the 59th Division abreast of the Scheldt, with the enemy holding the marshland on the opposite side by a series of machine gun posts which had been erected to facilitate the retirement of the main body. A good deal of heavy shelling was experienced. The "change-over" in the front line was rather more frequently made than with "A" Class troops because of the physical condition of the men. Their spirit was, however, excellent. "I was filled with admiration," wrote Captain A. W. Stapley, "at the way the men worked and the cheerfulness that was shown by those who were obviously unfitted for the job which they were doing. The conditions with regard to weather at the time were bad and the Scheldt was in flood, which made the marshland difficult to work in. The river had to be crossed by plank bridges put up by the R.E. Although the 15th were lucky in this respect, other battalions lost men by drowning when going over on raids or holding advanced posts across the river."

The Battalion, under Major Oliver, 4th Essex, with Captain Owen Clancy as Adjutant, entrained at South Town Station, Great Yarmouth, in two parties on May 5th, 1918, having a total strength of 133 officers and 1,062 other ranks. Upon arrival at Dover it marched to South Point Barracks, where the night was spent. A third party, consisting of the first line transport, was sent direct to Southampton for embarkation. The next day, May 6th, the Battalion went aboard Transport No. 62 at 10 a.m. and reached Calais at 2 p.m., from whence it marched to No. 2 Overflow Camp at Beaumaris. Lieut.-Colonel G. J. Hornsby Wright, 5th Essex, took over command on arrival in France. Three officers and 97 other ranks were sent on May 7th as reinforcements to Etaples, and the following day the Battalion entrained at Fontinette Station, Calais, for Brijos, from which town it proceeded to billets in Gricourt and Marest. Buses were taken at Faux on May 9th for a camp outside Grand Servins, where the Battalion came under the administration of the 177th Brigade, 59th Division, X Corps, of the First Army. Until June 16th the men were busily engaged in training and in digging a reserve line. The 15th Essex then marched to Le Vielfort, reaching Hestrus on the following day, where training was again undertaken and notification was received that the Battalion had been designated the 15th (G.) Battalion The Essex Regiment. A draft of 60 other ranks reported on June 20th and 76 low category men were transferred to the Labour Base at Boulogne. Training proceeded throughout July, varied by two moves, the first by lorry to Ambricourt, on July 9th, and the second, on July 25th, to Breutencourt, close up to the front line. It was in this vicinity that the first spell of trench duty was undertaken, lasting only three days, from August 2nd to 5th. Upon relief by the 11th Shropshire L.I., the Battalion went to Chat Maigre

and on August 8th, upon relief by the 25th King's Liverpool Regiment, it occupied billets at Barly. After a short rest 'buses were taken for trenches at the Brickfields, the Battalion being in support. On August 28rd the Essex men marched to Saultz and entrained at the station next day for Aire, from which point they went to La Lacque. The Battalion entered the front line from St. Floris on August 27th, relieving the 16th Devonshires at Calonne-sur-Lys. The enemy were retiring and on August 29th an advance was made of 500 yards, which continued next day, for Lestrein was entered, the headquarters being at Merville. On August 31st the River Lawe was crossed and patrols entered La Gorgne. The Germans were still withdrawing and though obstinate resistance had to be overcome in places, the British Commander-in-Chief was able to report that "by the evening of 6th September the Lys salient had disappeared." In the early part of the month the Battalion was in and out of the line, with billeting quarters in Lestrein. Thereafter it went into the left sub-sector of the divisional front, with battalion headquarters at "Harleck Castle." A party of two officers and 30 other ranks carried out a raid on Two Tree Farm on the night of September 21st-22nd. They left Windy Post at 4.36 a.m., but had to cut a considerable amount of wire before they could make progress. Seven Germans were found occupying a trench, five of whom were killed as they attempted to get away. The raiders were not to get off scot free, however. A party of twenty men from the farmhouse attacked them and were beaten back by rifle fire and hand grenades. They had support from the flank, but this party was broken up by Lewis gun fire. The Essex men then made an attempt upon the farm, but heavy machine gun fire stopped them and they eventually retired to Windy Post after evacuating the wounded. The casualties were one man killed and one officer and six other ranks wounded. The Battalion spent a period in dug-outs and shelters at Riez Bailleul and went into the front line again on September 30th. Not for long, however, for the First Army was moving forward again and the 15th Essex were successively at La Bassee Road (October 2nd), Laventie North Post (October 3rd), Croix Marechal (October 5th), Fleurbaix (October 10th); then after a term in divisional reserve at Fleurbaix, they moved to Preuresques (October 17th). They were on the outskirts of Lille, but did not enter the town, however, for they marched by way of the Asylum to St. Audre on October 18th, and then all night long they tramped through La Madeleine to St. Maurice. Next day Mairais was reached, then Toufflers (October 22nd) and Hulans (October 22nd-23rd), at which latter place the Battalion was in brigade reserve. The Division was up against the line of the Scheldt, where the enemy offered a more determined resistance. When the Essex were in the line in the early morning of November 2nd a patrol of a sergeant and five men was cut off in a loop of the Scheldt. For

a time all hope was given up of their return, but under cover of darkness that night the sergeant and three men returned. The former had been wounded several times and also another of the party. Two men were killed, but their bodies were subsequently recovered. 2nd Lieut. Frampton and eleven other ranks raided a post that night and returned in safety, having found it unoccupied. The armies were again advancing, but there was not much change of scene for the Essex. The 11th Somersets were relieved on November 6th, with an outpost company in Cabaret Liard. When the Battalion was succeeded by the 13th West Riding of the 178th Brigade, it went to billets in Toufflers, from whence it marched to Grand Rejet on November 10th. The next day—Armistice Day—notification was received of the cessation of hostilities and the 15th Essex went back at once to Hullans. There they remained until the 15th, when they were transferred to Grusin and then to Seclin (November 16th), where they remained until the end of the month. On December 5th the Battalion went by lorry to Nocux-les-Mines, where the chief work was clearing up. Several coal miners were released from service. The Essex were in charge of the demobilization camp at Martin Eglise, Dieppe, and then went to Calais with the rest of the Division, where the outbreak of trouble over demobilization caused considerable concern for a time. The Essex were in charge of the leave camp. Lieut.-Colonel G. J. Hornsby Wright was demobilized in April, 1919, and was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Maitland, D.S.O., M.C., who was in command until the Battalion returned to England in 1919.

A concert party was formed after the Armistice had been signed and thereafter gave performances upon practically every night that duty permitted. It achieved considerable popularity, particularly for performances to the leave men in camp at Calais. The party included Captain A. W. Stapley, Sergeant Aspden, Sergeant W. Paine, Sergeant F. Smith, Corporal B. Fenwick, Lance-Corporal W. Druce, Privates W. Bishop, L. Faverd, Sparey, Hooker and F. Marshall. A very successful effort was the presentation of a three-act musical farce entitled "No, Uncle," which was written and produced by Captain Stapley.

The Battalion was presented with the King's Colour whilst stationed at Martin Eglise. On January 23rd, 1919, Major-General N. M. Smyth, V.C., C.B., commanding the Division, accompanied by Brigadier-General C. L. H. James, C.B., C.M.G., commanding the 177th Brigade, was the officiating officer. The colour was handed to the General by Major N. W. Stead, M.C., second-in-command, who, in turn, formally presented it to the colour party, upon which the parade presented arms and the colour was carried at the slow march to the centre of the Battalion, while the band played the National Anthem. After briefly narrating the history of the Essex Regiment, General Smyth reminded the Battalion of the part it had played and

alluded to its tenacity and devotion to duty. The Battalion then marched past in column of route, with colours flying, again formed up and presented arms, as the colour, in charge of an escort with fixed bayonets, was taken from the parade ground. There was a sequel to this ceremony in July, 1921, when the colours were deposited in St. Mary's Church, Ilford. They were received by the Vicar (Rev. H. V. Eardley Wilmot) from Captain A. W. Stapley, who was accompanied by Captain P. W. Tabrum and Lieut. J. H. P. Hamilton. In March, 1926, the colours were removed and placed in the care of The Essex Regiment Chapel at Warley.

Garrison Battalions.

TWO Garrison Battalions of The Essex Regiment were formed for overseas service during the war.

The 1st Garrison Battalion was formed at Denham on July 21st, 1915, as a Provisional Battalion from drafts of officers and men unfit for active service on account of age, infirmities or wounds received in action. The personnel was drawn from the following regiments: 3rd Essex, 3rd Bedford, 4th Bedford, 3rd Norfolk, 3rd Suffolk, 3rd Royal West Surrey, 5th Middlesex, 6th Middlesex, 3rd Royal West Kent, 3rd Northants, 3rd East Surrey, 5th Royal Fusiliers, 6th Royal Fusiliers, 3rd Buffs and 3rd Sussex. The first commanding officer was Major J. E. Blakeney, who, in August, 1915, was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel W. T. M. Reeve. The Battalion embarked at Devonport on the "Empress of Britain," 24th August, 1915, with a strength of 27 officers and 984 other ranks. It arrived at Mudros on September 3rd, where Lieut.-Colonel S. Goode succeeded Colonel Reeve, invalided, and commanded the unit for the remainder of the war. The Battalion saw varied service. "D" Company spent some time at Anzac and Cape Helles, whilst upon the occasion of the visit of Lord Kitchener to Lemnos in November, 1915, the Battalion furnished the guard of honour. During the evacuation of Gallipoli companies were employed in loading and unloading ammunition, guards and police duties at Anzac and Lemnos. Fifteen casualties were sustained at Anzac, including two killed. "A" and "C" Companies were also for a time at Tenedos. In February, 1916, the Battalion was transferred to Mex Camp, Egypt, and thence to Ismailia. Part of the Battalion was sent to Ballah and Shallufa for patrol and guard work. A change of scene came in April, when the unit was moved to Zagazig, and in January, 1917, Khartoum was reached. After a stay of a year a transfer was made to Port Tewfik. In February, 1918, the Battalion was sent to Jerusalem by way of Kantara, Ludd and Lydd, where detachments were found for protection of Junction Station, Jerusalem railway. Port Said was the next station, from August to October, when the Battalion, with a strength of 27 officers and 585 other ranks, embarked for Salonika. It was selected to form part of the Inter-Allied Garrison at Scutari (Albania) and reached that town in January, 1919, where it remained until demobilization in the same year.

The 2nd Garrison Battalion, formed also in 1915, was sent to India in 1916 and was located in Mhow area. It was disbanded in January, 1920, when the cadre was sent to Deolali.

Home Service Battalions.

THERE were two draft finding units associated with the Service Battalions, viz., 12th and 14th Battalions The Essex Regiment. The 12th Battalion was formed on October 26th, 1914, at Harwich, with Captain R. N. Thompson in temporary command until the arrival of Lieut.-Colonel R. F. Walters, who remained until the unit was disbanded. The first move was to White City, London, in January, 1915, then to Dorking for a few days in the May following and back to Colchester before the end of the month. In March, 1916, the Battalion was serving at Harwich, where it remained until disbandment on August 31st, 1916, the personnel being transferred to the 25th and 27th Training Reserve Battalions.

The 14th Battalion was first composed of the reserve companies of the 13th Battalion in July, 1915, and was termed a detachment of the latter unit. It was stationed at Brentwood and was commanded by Lieut. L. Dyer. The formation moved to Cherryhinton Camp, Cambridge, on July 19th, 1915, and was designated in orders issued on September 15th following as the 14th (Reserve) Battalion The Essex Regiment, with Captain L. Dyer still in command. The next transfer was to Hyderabad Barracks, Colchester, on October 30th, 1915, thence to Northampton on January 3rd, 1916, where Major A. P. Ballard was in command for a short time. He was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel G. Carly on February 24th, 1916. The Battalion moved to Tweseldown Camp, Aldershot, on May 13th, 1916. The unit's title was changed on September 1st, 1916, to 98th Training Reserve Battalion. The personnel then consisted mainly of category men and medical boards were frequent, as a result of which there were occasional transfers overseas or to the Machine Gun School.

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